Three Recitals

by

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ABSTRACT

The dissertation consists of three conducting recitals.

RECITAL I

November 12, 2016, 8:00 pm., Power Center, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Performed by the University Symphony Orchestra and Opera Theatre of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Program: *Roméo et Juliette,* Charles Gounod.

RECITAL II

November 9, 2016, 7:30 pm., Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Performed by the Campus Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Program: Symphony No. 5, Piotr Illytch Tchaikovsky.

April 11, 2017, 8:00 pm., Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Performed by the Campus Symphony Orchestra of the Campus Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Program: Symphony No. 2, Johannes Brahms.

RECITAL III

November 6, 2017, 8:00 pm., Hill Auditorium, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Performed by the Campus Symphony Orchestra of the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance. Program: *Midsummer Night's Dream* Overture*,* Felix Mendelssohn; Symphony No. 4, Robert Schumann.

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM

Roméo et Juliette. Opera in 5 Acts — Charles Gounod (1818-1893)

RECITAL 1 PROGRAM NOTES

Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet is the ultimate story of love. Ever since its creation, (which is not really known but presumed between 1591-1595) it has been extremely popular and throughout the centuries it has inspired artists to produce all kinds of creations based on the play. Hundreds of paintings and sculptures, several musicals, ballets, a concert overture, a symphonic poem, movies, and this opera (to mention some of the many works), have yielded a different interpretation of this magnificent work; some even have a happy ending!

The text that Shakespeare drew from to make his play comes from *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet*, which is a narrative poem translated into English from Italian by the English poet Arthur Brooke in 1562. The Italian version of the play was a novel written by Matteo Bandello between 1531-1545. Even before these authors, there were others who also had something to do with the plot of Romeo and Juliet; Luigi da Porto (1485-1529) introduced the names of the rival families, which first appeared in Dante's *The Divine Comedy* (completed in 1320) as well as some of the main characters: Tybalt, Mercutio, Friar Lawrence, Count Paris, Juliet's nurse and the location of Verona. If one wants to go even further in the past, there are stories written in the third century that talk about a similar plot in which two lovers belong to different, rival families and a potion that induces sleep. Be that as it may, the fact remains that this story can be as fresh today as it was when it was written, and all the political issues represented in it and the inevitable end speak volumes of the nature of our

human condition, and how that sadly often gets the best of us. The story puts forth some factors of life: Love, which inspires beyond imagination but it also invites violence as it gives it an excuse to fight for it; the boldness of individuals to confront society and challenge its set ways of being; fate, as this all-knowing, dominating force that steers the course of this story, as it is presented in the beginning of the opera by the chorus; and religion, as the words of the Priests carry a heavy weight in society.

Characters (in French):

- Roméo
- Juliette
- Stéphano
- Gertrude
- Tybalt
- Benvolio
- Mercutio
- Pâris
- Grégorio
- Capulet
- Frére Laurent
- Le Duc
- Frére Jean

There are some characters who do not appear in Gounod's opera but are present in Shakespeare's play. As an example of this, we hear of Rosaline, the initial love of Rómeo, as she is mentioned in the opera, but she is not a character with a role. Also the ladies Montague and Capulet are absent from the opera, as well as Lord Montague and Prince Escalus of Verona; the Apothecary who sells the poison to Roméo, and some servants from both houses.

The Story in Gounod's Opera:

In broad terms, this opera follows Shakespeare's play closely, as librettists Carré and Barbier changed a few things (most notably a detail in the end). The plot takes place in 14th Century Verona, Italy. The Chorus, ominously declares that for centuries the Houses of Capulet and Montague have lived in feud, failing to achieve peace between them. Blood has been spilt in both houses; then, as a light shining in a stormy sky, Juliette appears and suddenly Roméo loves her. The poor lovers will ultimately pay with their lives the price of loving one another, as they belong each to one of these two houses that hate one another to death.

Act I:

Capulet is throwing a masked ball to celebrate Juliette's birthday. Tybalt is encouraging Count Pâris to woo Juliette and marry her. Pâris is excited about the prospect of marrying into the Capulet family. All is fun and joy. Meanwhile, Roméo, Mercutio and Benvolio take advantage of being in disguise to attend the party,

as Roméo is looking for Rosaline, his current love who did not return his affections. Mercutio makes fun of Roméo and his situation. Then, Juliette appears, accompanied by her father Capulet, and she is so beautiful she paralyzes the party when she is introduced. Roméo falls inescapably in love with Juliette after he sees her sing and dance, despite having failed to notice whose daughter she is. He immediately forgets about Rosaline, and from that moment onwards, only Juliette exists for him. They meet, Juliette falls in love with Roméo as well. She has no idea that Roméo belongs to the house of Montague. Tybalt notices Roméo in disguise flirting with Juliette; Roméo realizes he has been made and escapes the party. Tybalt, enraged, swears that Roméo's death is certain and he tells Capulet and Juliette that the masked man is Roméo Montague! Tybalt urges revenge to Capulet and wants to kill Roméo there, but Capulet orders him to leave it because he wants the party to continue. Juliette immediately understands the problem she is in.

Act II:

Roméo returns to look for Juliette. He finds her at her balcony. They profess their love to one another and despite of knowing that they belong to enemy families, they are willing to leave behind everything they have and are (even their own name) in order to be together.

Act III:

Roméo asks Frére Laurent to marry him to Juliette. Initially he is in disbelief, but then he thinks that this union might actually solve the never-ending conflict between the two families. He agrees, and with the help of Gertrude (Juliette's nana) they get married. Then, Stéphano sings to the Capulets to provoke them. Grégorio comes out and they begin to fight. Mercutio steps in to defend Stéphano from Grégorio, and Tybalt shows up to take Grégorio's place. People from both sides start to come out to watch. Roméo begs Mercutio not to fight, even after Tybalt insults and provokes him. Roméo recognizes Tybalt as someone whom he can no longer hate, much less kill, as he is family of Juliette. Nevertheless, Tybalt's rage knows no limits and since Roméo won't fight him, Mercutio will, and he is killed defending Roméo. Roméo gets consumed with pain and rage and avenges his friend's death by killing Tybalt. The Duke comes as both families are now mourning their own, and he banishes Roméo on pain of death.

Act IV:

Roméo and Juliette spend the night as husband and wife. At first light, Roméo departs for exile. Capulet visits Juliette and informs her that she is to marry Pâris, as this was Tybalt's dying wish. Juliette is desperate because she already is married in secret, and she will not become Pâris's wife even though her father demands it. Capulet instructs Frére Laurent to prepare Juliette to get married. He has no choice but to obey, but in secret, he offers her a potion which will make her appear dead thus

avoiding the marriage to Pâris. She accepts it. The plan is to have Roméo look for her when she wakes up in the tomb two days after she “dies.” However, news of this plan never reach Roméo. All is set for the wedding, and as soon as the ceremony starts, Juliette, having consumed the potion moments before, collapses and Capulet declares her dead.

Act V:

The tomb. Juliette is lying on her resting place. The letter which Frére Laurent wrote to Roméo informing him of the plan of Juliette’s fake death so he could find her when she wakes up never reached him. All Roméo knows is that his Juliette has died. He breaks into the tomb. He finds her, still inert. Believing that she is dead, he drinks poison so that he can join her in death forever. Moments after he drinks the potion, Juliette wakes up, all well, only to find that Roméo has poisoned himself. Juliette cannot imagine her life without Roméo, so she finds a knife and stabs herself. Both sing one last duet together, and then die in each other’s arms.

In the original Shakespeare play Romeo is already dead by the time Juliet wakes up. There is no remembering anything together. The only option left for Juliet to be together with Romeo is through death, where he is waiting for her, so she stabs herself shortly after the sight of her deceased husband.

The Composer:

Parisian composer Charles Gounod began his musical training during his childhood. He lost his father at the age of four. His mother taught him piano. She wanted him to become something other than a musician, but Gounod's heart was set to music from his early years. He began composing by age twelve, and by eighteen he entered the Paris Conservatoire. At twenty-one he was the recipient of the Grand Prix de Rome, which enabled him to study in Rome, Italy, where he was exposed to sacred music from the sixteenth century. This event would mark his life forever, as the religious customs and education of his new surroundings deeply influenced and became part of him.

Gounod was extremely religious, and this trait made itself present in this opera, especially noticeable during the wedding scene (Figure 1.1), with Roméo and Juliette praying to God by singing in a chant-like manner:

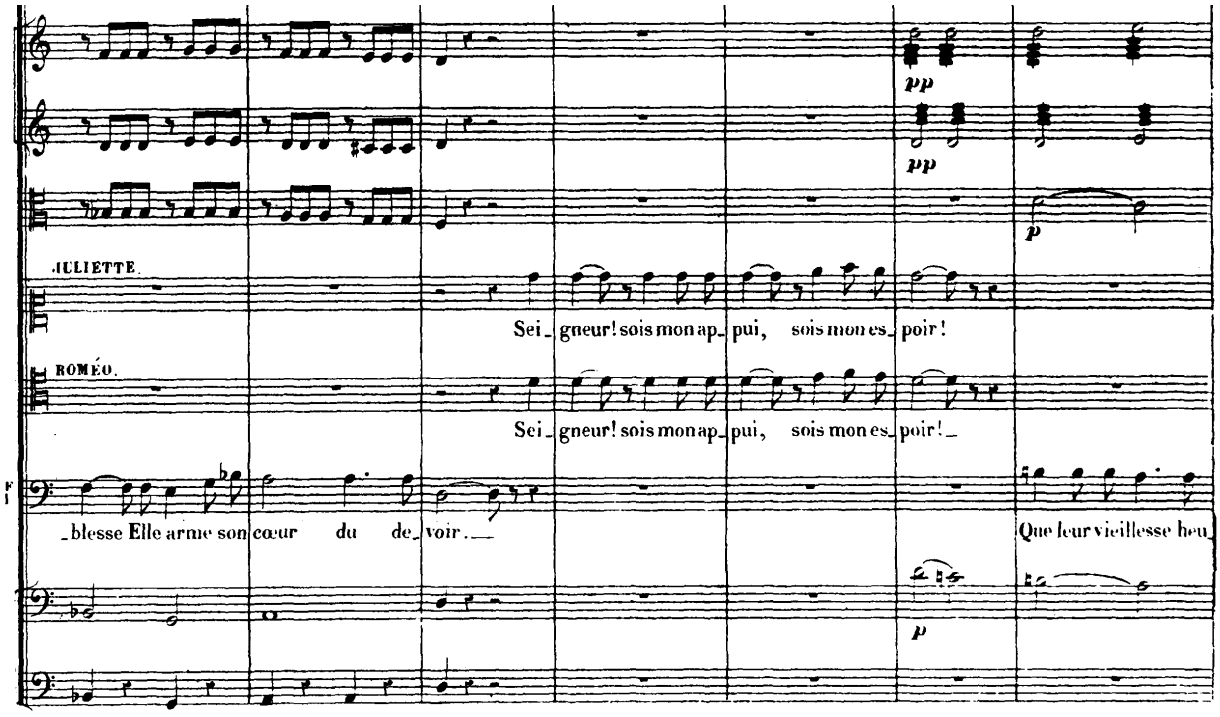


Figure 1.1 Act 3, No. 11. Trio et Quatuor. Measures 37-43

The Music:

The score was written in 1867. It employs two flutes plus piccolo; pairs of oboes, clarinets and bassoons; four horns; two trumpets; three trombones; timpani, bass drum, cymbals and triangle; and SATB chorus. *Roméo et Juliette* belongs to the tradition of the Grand Opera. This means that all aspects of the opera are large; what is on stage is complex and elaborate; musical forces are large with massive choruses and crowds; and the Grand Opera's premise was that the audience must learn from history rather than about history. As a result, the stories tend to link past to present in order to provide a moral context from which to learn. Political, religious and social forces are on full display and their actions shape societies and a whole way of living.

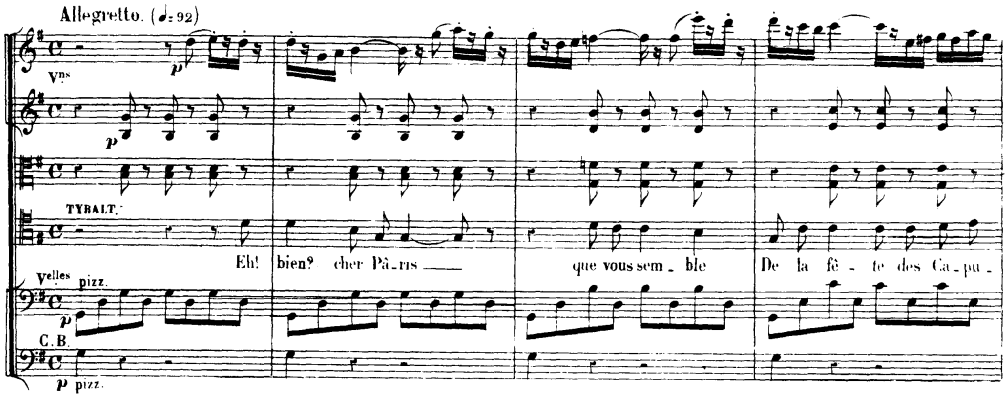


Figure 1.2 Act 1, No. 1 Rehearsal 11. Measures 1-4

Gounod's composition style reflects a clear texture. As is evident from the example above (Figure 1.2) and below (Figure 1.3), it is easy to notice the patterns with which he composes: the rhythms are usually not complex, and they tend to move together, as in blocks. Harmonically speaking, this example does not go beyond the chords of G and C.

Perhaps the most elaborated portion of the opera in terms of orchestration and writing skills happens in the overture, where Gounod inserted a little fugue.

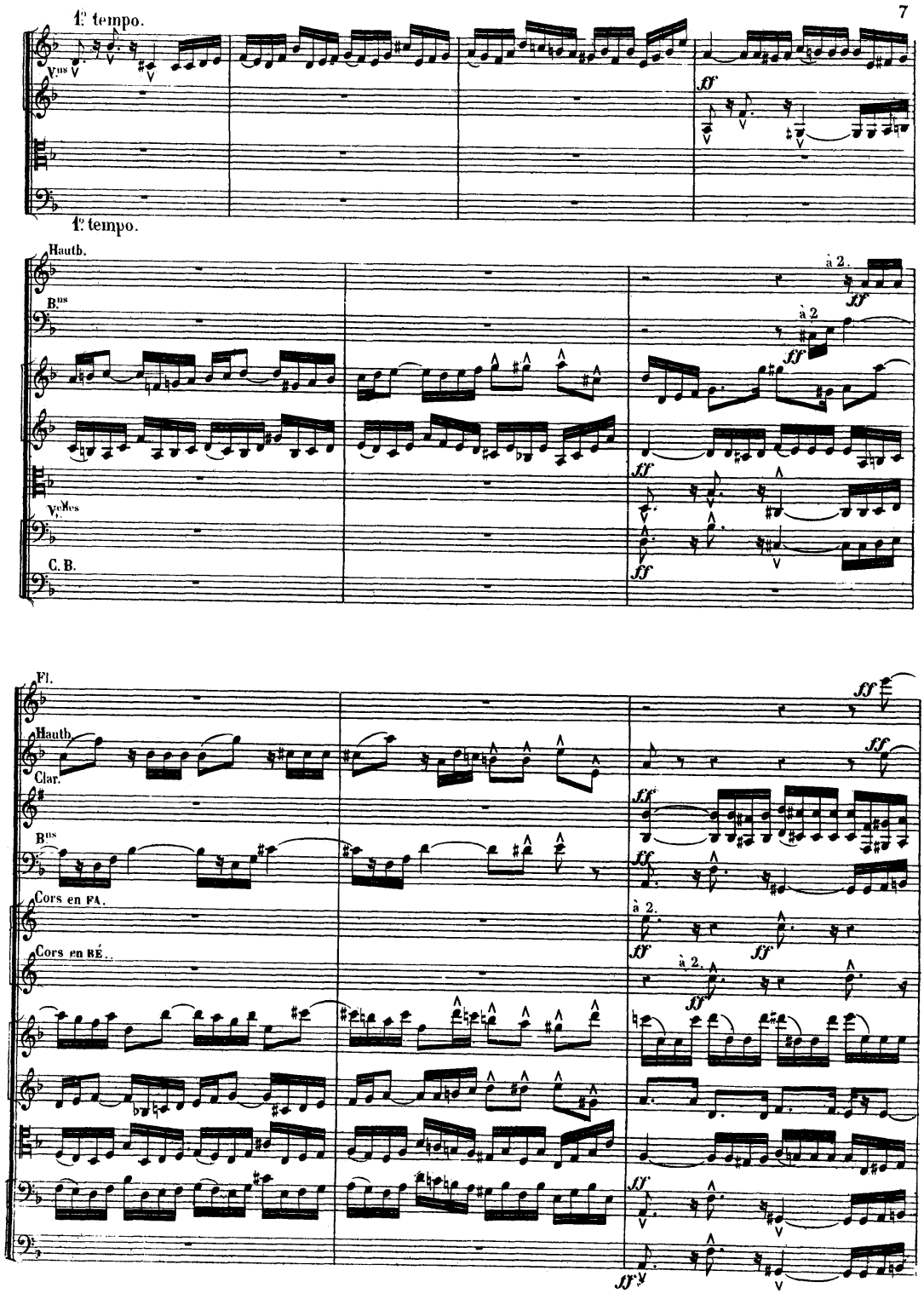


Figure 1.3 *Overture*. Measures 33-42

The chorus participates in powerful, decisive moments in the opera such as when Mercutio and Tybalt have been killed, and as Roméo is being sentenced to exile. The chorus is the voice and the anger of the peoples, and Gounod uses it very dramatically to show the severity of their problems and will (or lack of) to change. Here is an example that shows the disdain and hatred between both families. Notice the musical construction, dynamic fortissimo, homophonic texture, with text changed to call out the name of the families (Figure 1.4).

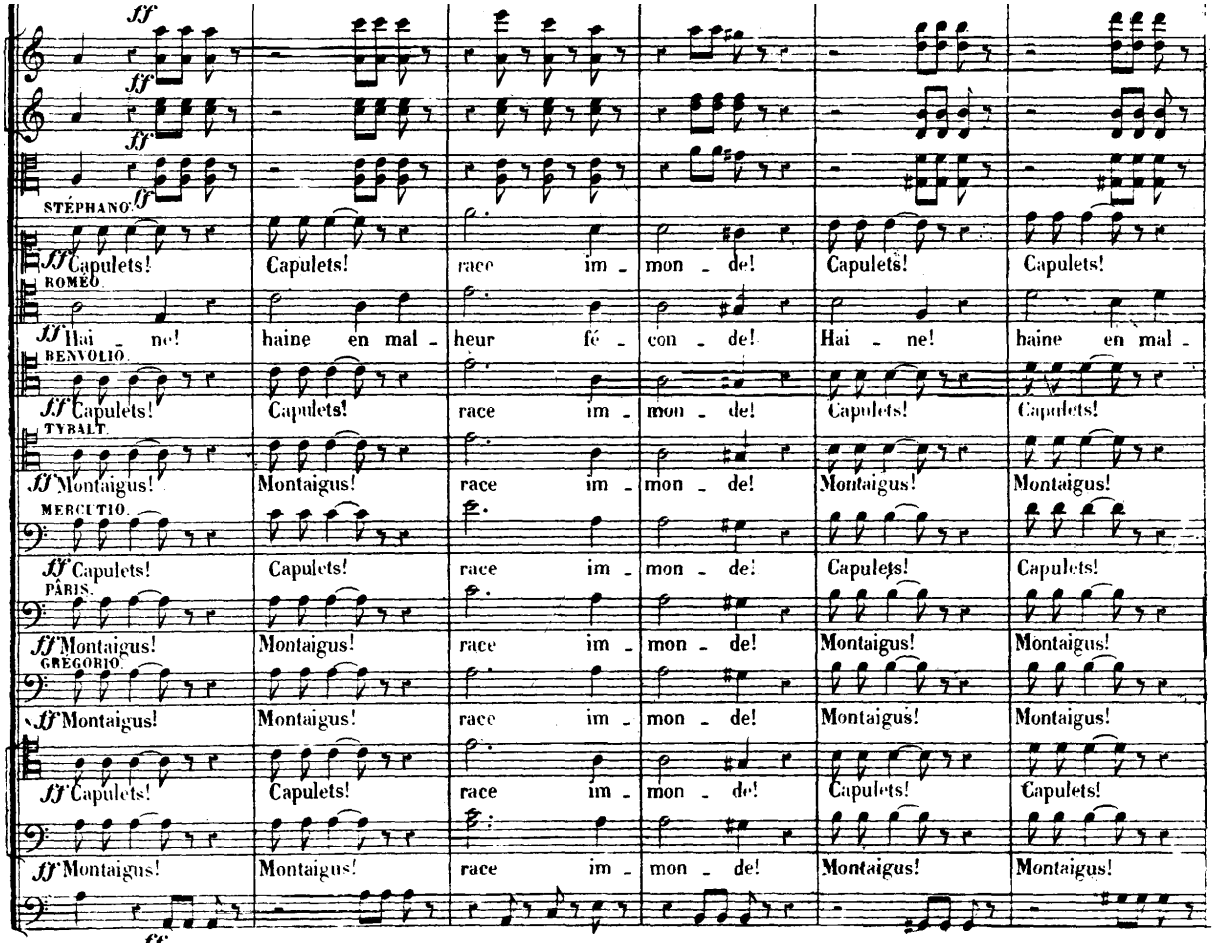


Figure 1.4 Act 3, No. 13. 8 measures before Rehearsal 18

One of the most interesting aspects of this opera is the choice that Gounod made to compose so many duets for the principal characters Roméo and Juliette. A great portion of the opera is spent with these two characters, which means that in order to prepare this work for performances, the mentioned characters need to be singers who possess great endurance, as the music is not as shared between other principal characters.

Roméo's Cavatina

Typically, cavatina arias are presented without repeats and usually possess a brilliant character. They also are constructed under an ABA structure. *Roméo's Cavatina* marks his entrance as the first aria that he signs as a soloist in the opera.

The structure of this aria is also that of an ABA form, except that it begins with an introduction without a clear tonality or beat. As shown on the example below, the cavatina begins with an F Major chord with the strings playing pizz. The key on the page is C Major, but effectively it is not so by the second bar, and the beat almost does not exist. These first five bars beautifully exemplify the intoxicated state of Roméo's heart, as the text is also painted by the leaps in the voice, first by an upward minor third, then up a tritone from C-G flat, which then appears to be where the music is headed harmonically at the end of measure 5. However, measure 6 presents the tempo marking *Adagio* and a beat. Suddenly, instead of being in the expected key of G flat

Major, Gounod surprises us with D Major, removing Roméo's feet off the ground, harmonically speaking, lifting him to the clouds in which only he can be at this moment. This *Adagio* only lasts six measures; enough to give Roméo another chance to show his delirium state by singing fast sixteenth notes, again almost quasi recitativo (Figure 1.5).

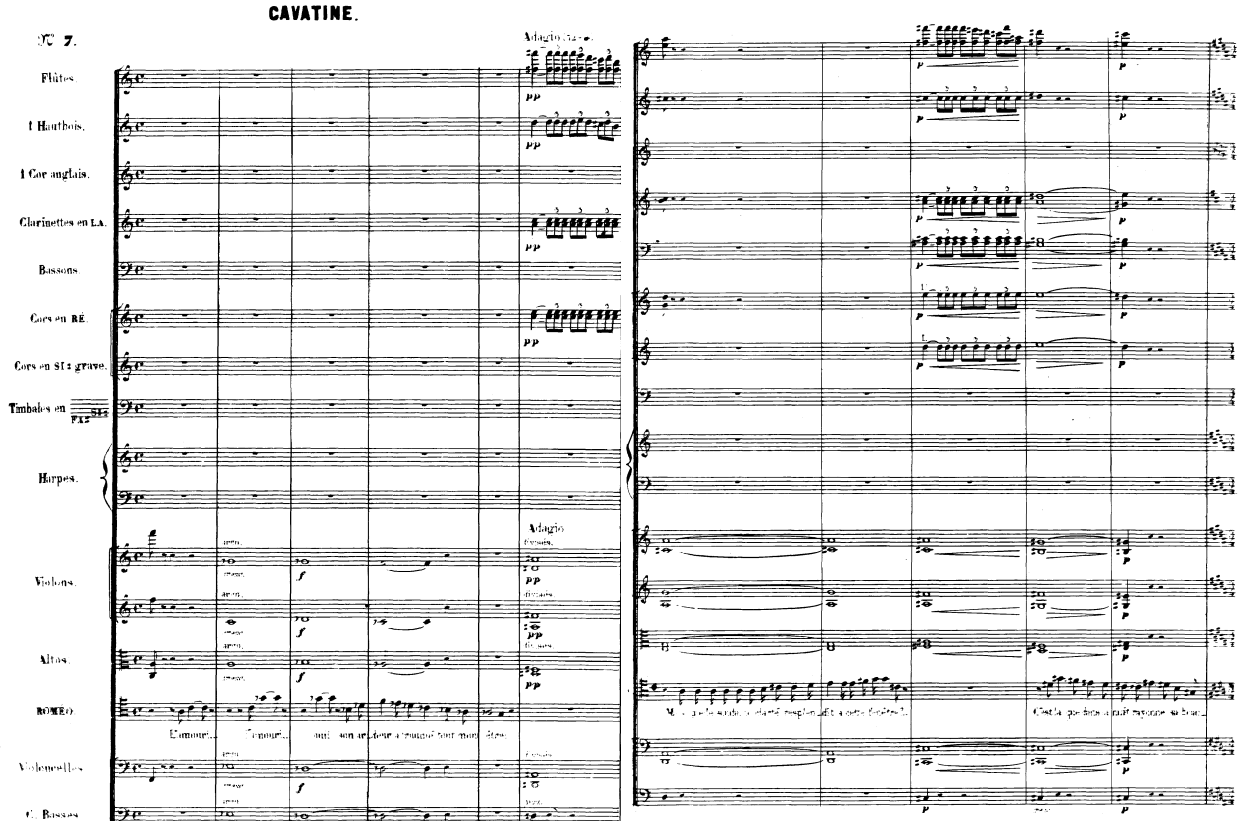


Figure 1.5 Act 2, No. 7

The harmonic progression as appears on the page starting in the *Adagio* goes through D - A^7over D - $F\#^6_4$ - $G\#^7$ over C# - $C\#^7$. As it appears that the aria proper will start, there is yet another tempo change to *Larghetto* from measures 12-15.

This section gives the clarinet a little solo in the key of F#, which at the moment sounds as the tonic of the aria, when in truth its function is that of the dominant of B Major, starting on measure 16. The upward gesture of the clarinet is also suggestive of the iconic balcony scene: Roméo is on the ground looking up above, searching for Juliette, gathering himself, getting inspired (Figure 1.6).

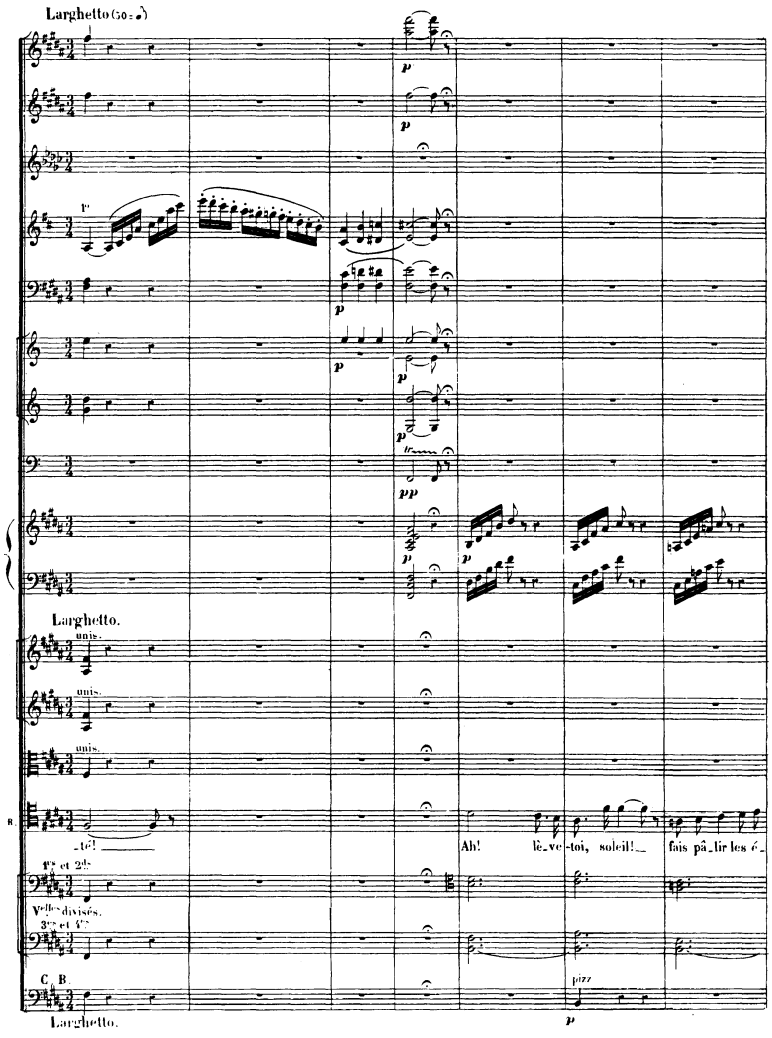


Figure 1.6 Act 2, No. 7. Measures 12-18

In performance this aria's key is not typically performed where written, but in B flat Major. This has become standard practice, as the opera is long and this aria has a high tessitura for the tenor. The harmonic change is done by lowering all parts a half step starting on measure 9. Once the aria begins with "Ah! lève toi, soleil!" there is a clear ABA structure, and the instrumentation is reduced to the tenor with strings and harps accompaniment with some interjections by the winds. The A section of this aria goes from measure 16-30. The harmonic rhythm is sustained by pedal tones at first, while the chords change once every bar. The rhythm in the accompaniment is repetitive with three distinct layers: the sixteenths of the harp, the dotted half notes of the strings and the pizz of the double bass, with the added interjections of the winds mentioned before.

The B section of the aria is much more driven. The first violins assume a more protagonist role and become independent from the voice and from the rest of the orchestration, as they have their own music for half of this section. The overall agitation of the rhythm in the strings depict Roméo's description of how dreamy Juliette is, and how she undoes a curl of hair, which comes to caress her cheek, and that her eyes speak to his heart, and his heart has understood. Harmonically, this section is slightly more active as well, with some chromatic motion towards the end. Then, the A section returns at m.55. But this time, the only instruments that do not play are the trumpets, trombones and timpani.

The aria ends with an uplifting, dreamy, positive and warm feeling, like the text invokes the sun to rise, however ending in pianissimo dynamic, as Roméo was singing to the great star above in the sky waiting to come out.

In summary, the structure of this aria looks like this:

Sections	Introduction	A	B	A
Measure Numbers	1-15	16-30	31-54	55-79
Tonal Centers	Adagio 5-11/ Larghetto 12-15 Tonally Ambiguous. One chord per bar.	B Major	B Major with a little chromaticism	B Major
Orchestration	Voice, strings and winds	Same as introduction, with a prominent harp part	More active accompaniment. Minus harp	Tutti, except trumpets, trombones and timpani

Figure 1.7 Summary of Aria *Ah! lève toi Soleil!*

Roméo et Juliette became a success immediately. Along with *Faust,* this is one of Gounod's most significant operatic achievements.

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM

Symphony No. 5 in E minor. Op. 64

Piotr Illytch Tchaikovsky
(1840-1893)

Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 73

Johannes Brahms
(1833-1897)

RECITAL 2 PROGRAM NOTES

Russian culture and education demanded that art music had to be of the highest caliber, and fundamentally different from western music in terms of content and form. It needed to reflect the strength of Russia, its intellect, philosophy, politics, heritage and beauty.

When Tchaikovsky started to work on his fifth symphony, he was struggling to find inspiration to compose. Moreover, he was very challenged with formal composition techniques. He wanted to be as expressive as he could while utilizing structures such as the sonata form (a Western-Music structural form used since the classical era and one that Tchaikovsky confessed he was unable to master). Notwithstanding, Tchaikovsky possessed a remarkable ability for composing unforgettable melodies of great beauty and charm. This, perhaps because of his rural upbringing and constant exposure to folk songs became one his fortitudes. He wrote In a letter to Nadezhda von Meck:

…I grew up in the backwoods, saturating myself from earliest childhood with the inexplicable beauty of the characteristic traits of Russian folk-song.

Tchaikovsky was not known for writing “Russian” melodies, but their repetitive structure in terms of harmony and rhythm is something that got naturally transferred into his own music.

A decade passed between the composition of the fourth and fifth symphonies. Music was not flowing through Tchaikovsky with the usual ease; he complained that the beginning was hard and that he had to “squeeze it from his dull brain.” He was determined to prove to himself and to the world that he was not worn out as a composer. After four months of intense work, the result was a fantastic symphony that encompasses great beauty, melodies, drama, and intense personal feelings. It is very possible that he thought that a given structure like sonata form was not the best vehicle for him to use and express the full lushness of his emotions, or that he tried to use it but could not make it work, and as a result either diverted from it or resorted to other means of composing his music. Perhaps, the single most defining aspect of Tchaikovsky’s music -other than his melodies- is the use of phrase repetition.

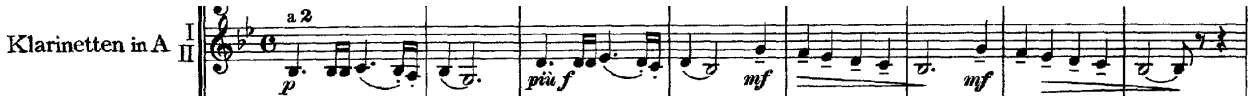


Figure 2.1 Introduction from 1st movement

The excerpt above (Figure 2.1) is found at the very opening of the fifth symphony. Notice how it is very clear that the music is built by two contrasting ideas,

each of them two measures long. Tchaikovsky repeats both ideas twice. The first idea has two differences: dynamic and pitch level, but the rhythm is exactly the same, except for the last note that is a half note instead of a dotted half note, in order to make it possible for the second idea to begin as an upbeat. The second idea is also virtually the same: same pitches, same dynamics and articulations, but the duration of the last note changed. This music is not only a collection of pitches that start the symphony, but the main motif of it.

The harmonic language used by Tchaikovsky in the beginning of the first movement is repetitive as well. Composed mainly by i-iv-i chords, both at the introduction with the clarinets and then at the *allegro con anima,* this “Plagal” progression decries the character of resignation, acceptance of the inescapable fate. Moreover, the tonal relationship from movement to movement is also governed by a logic that follows this same progression throughout the entire symphony. The four movement’s keys are e-minor, D-Major, A-Major and E-Major. If one considers the pitches E-D-A-E, then the A-Major of the third movement could be understood as the IV of I, which will also come in the finale; the D-Major of the second movement then becomes the IV of A-Major from the third movement, or IV/IV. Apart from this, it seems evident that Tchaikovsky is looking up to Beethoven’s fifth symphony in the overall harmonic trajectory of the symphony, and possibly more: where Beethoven goes from darkness to light (c-minor to C-Major) eventually vanquishing his own *fate*, Tchaikovsky

goes from “complete resignation” to “acceptance of fate” -a form of victory- (e-minor to E-Major).

Russian composer and pianist virtuoso Sergey Taneyev studied composition with Tchaikovsky at the Moscow Conservatory. He points out that the melodies of Tchaikovsky are complete musical thoughts and therefore not susceptible for development. Because Tchaikovsky hears them in his head before he writes them, along with their harmonies, rhythms and instrumentation and not as separate events -as he tells his patroness Nadezhda von Meck- these melodies can do little more than to be repeated; but in the hands of an orchestrator of Tchaikovsky’s caliber they can create musical tension and satisfaction while generating expectation for the next climax in many different ways. He can build climaxes with devices such as ostinato figures, dramatic pedal points, elided cadences, through thicker orchestration, and more complicated harmonies expressed with an intensified rhythmic activity, to mention a few. A quintessential example of this occurs in the middle of the second movement (Figure 2.2): the melody that starts at rehearsal B played *con noblezza* is then subjected to an increase of dynamics, tempo and overall urgency. Virtually every measure has a verbal indication of some kind that increases the momentum of the music and drives it through its repetitions, each time with more intensity until the climax(es) at *Tempo I, animando* and the following bar. Notice here, same rhythms (except for the third climax with the *ritenuto*), same gesture, different pitches and dynamics.

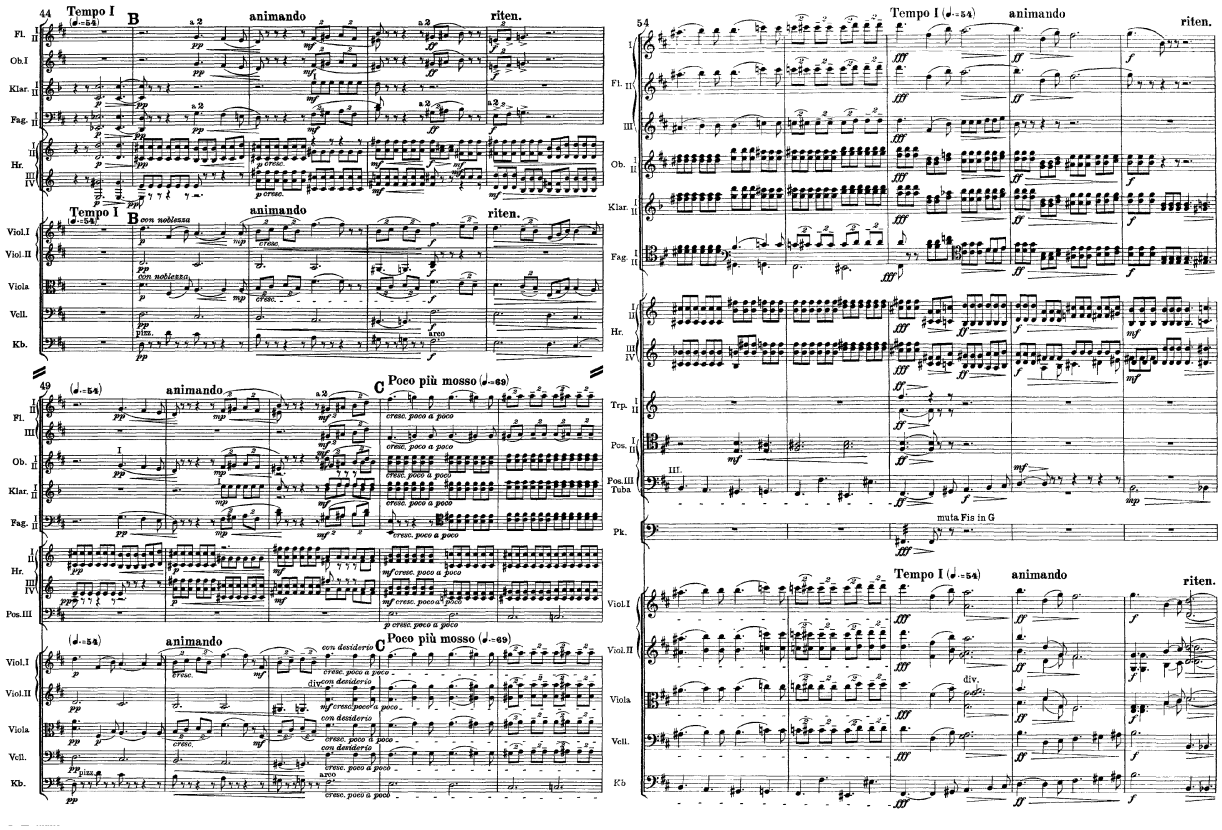


Figure 2.2 2nd movement. Measures 44-58

Tchaikovsky left no further program information about the rest of the symphony. However, we know that he wrote a few words to the beginning melody of the Horn solo (Figure 2.3) in the second movement: *Oh, que je t'aime, oh mon amie.* Whether or not the last word should read "amie" or "ami" is unclear given Tchaikovsky's actual sexual preferences. What is clear is that this melody needs no words to express so much love.

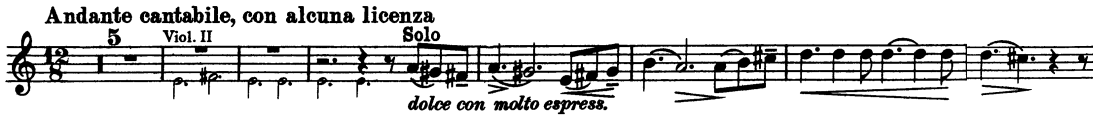


Figure 2.3 2nd movement. Horn, Measures 8-12

Embedded in the symphony lies the motif of “fate,” the powerful all-seeing and all-knowing force that governs life (See Figure 2.1). In a manner similar to Berlioz and his “idée fixe” which makes appearances throughout *Symphonie Fantastique*, Tchaikovsky makes use of his “fate” motif in the fifth symphony as well, and it does not sound optimistic at the start of the symphony. The “fate” motif is presented in E-minor, and as shown in Figure 2.1 the music of this theme always falls, even when there are upward leaps of fifth (m.2-3) or sixths (m.4-5,6-7) in the melody.

In *Symphonie Fantastique*, Berlioz infused his *idée fixe* with meaning, as it represents the main character (which happens to be Berlioz himself) going through different experiences, dreams, nightmares and visions. As the music progresses, the “artist” (as he calls himself) becomes affected by the music depending on the mood of a given moment, and the fact that the *idée fixe* is presented frequently reminds the listeners that there is a connecting thread throughout all movements, providing a sense of wholeness of the piece. Other composers have made use of a similar device. Beethoven, for instance, utilizes the main motif of his fifth symphony as a statement and also as a means of unifying the work as a whole, since it too appears throughout his symphony, not to mention how he develops it to the point that we can see how the

whole symphony grows out of that motif. Later, this same composition method was used by Wagner under the name “leitmotif,” and it too makes recurrent appearances through his music, drawing connections between the music and a particular person, situation, or idea. This is found most noticeably in his opera *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, where there are over sixty different leitmotifs used to represent everything from servitude to the magical ring.

Tchaikovsky respected Beethoven, but he loved Mozart, and beyond this, he considered Mozart to be “the Christ of Music.” These two composers provided inspiration and influence to Tchaikovsky in many ways. As a composer and performer, Mozart had everything anyone could wish for. He had the gift of melody, creativity, drama, harmony and perfection of form, and though Tchaikovsky knew he could not compose like Mozart, he certainly tried to emulate certain traits, such as the musical intensification of rhythms and orchestration at the arrival of musical goals.

Figure 2.4 shows what may appear as two climactic arrivals to the dynamic of triple forte. However, the fifth measure of *Tempo I* is the actual climax, as it shows the intensified orchestration and the cadence on the parallel major of E minor. This music is preceded by a *stringendo* that starts with *piano molto crescendo* into *Tempo I*, which is one of Tchaikovsky’s means of creating momentum for a big musical goal. In this case, Tchaikovsky uses both dynamic and pulse combined to enhance the emotional-dramatic event.

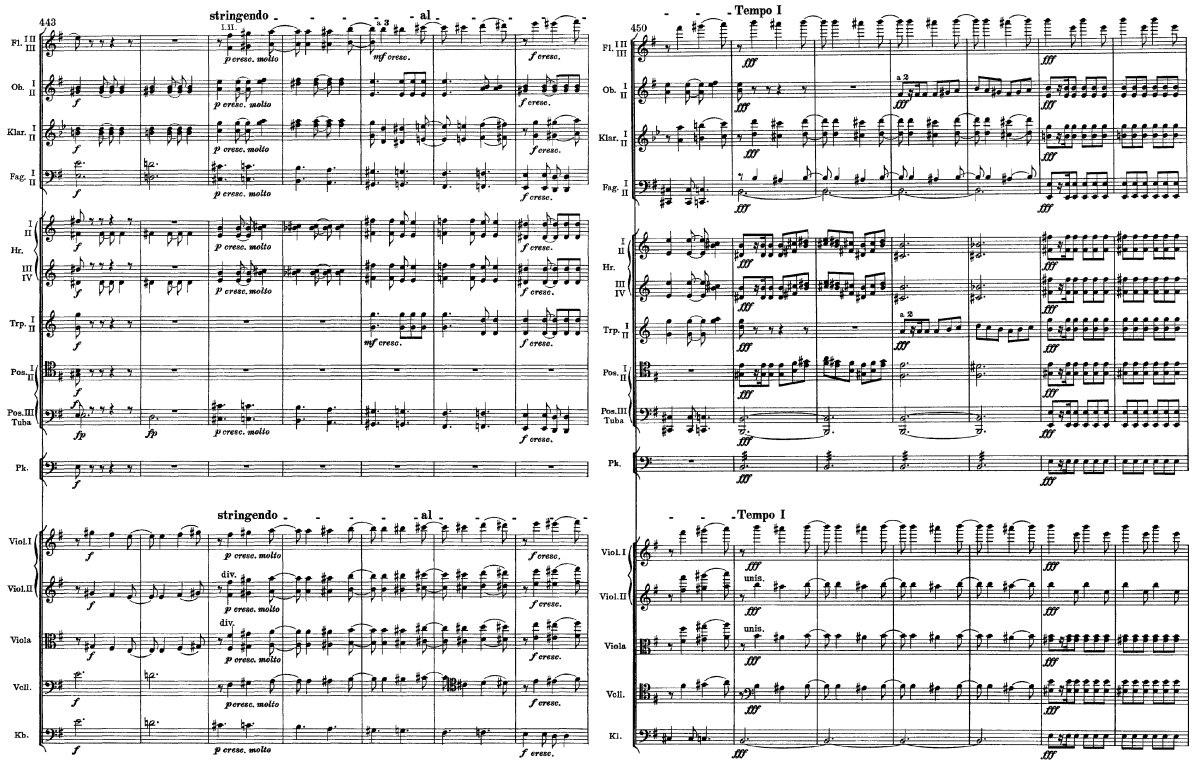


Figure 2.4 1st Movement. Measures 443-456

As was mentioned before, “fate” is the central theme in Tchaikovsky’s fifth symphony as it is for Beethoven’s fifth, with the well known “fate knocking at the door” motif. It is no accident that Tchaikovsky chose “fate” as a suitable idea for his symphony, since he too felt its weight on top of him. Interestingly, Tchaikovsky’s original intention with his fourth symphony was to show his answer to Beethoven’s fifth, as that symphony also is based upon another “fate” theme, one that perhaps is darker than that of the fifth symphony.

Tchaikovsky wrote in his notes what appears to be a program for the first movement of the fifth symphony. His thoughts are private, not to be made public or

shown in order to help understand the narrative of the symphony. His wishes were for the public to find meaning through the music alone. Tchaikovsky writes what is common knowledge to us today:

"Complete resignation before Fate, or, which is the same, before the inscrutable predestination of Providence. Murmurs, doubts, plaints, reproaches against XXX. Shall I throw myself in the embraces of faith?"

Scholars argue that XXX is a reference to Tchaikovsky's homosexual preferences, despite his failed attempt to sustain a matrimony to a woman by the name of Antonina Milyukova. His pretend marriage was asphyxiating and depressing, and it nearly drove him to commit suicide. However, torment like this probably became the very fuel that he was so desperately needing in order to find inspiration to compose. Tchaikovsky's understanding of the symphony as a genre was that the symphony was the absolute highest form of expression of the soul of the composer. It had to be so, since it contained no words, because the deepest feelings of the human being could not be expressed with words, but only with music, according to him.

Tchaikovsky's symphonies have an inherent "dance" quality. Taneyev describes that his teacher's symphonic music is "ballet music." This claim, though it may seem offensive to some degree, has also some truth to it; for example, in the second symphony there is an *Andantino Marziale;* the third symphony has an *"alla tedesca,"* in other words, a German waltz that ends with a polonaise; the third movement of the fifth symphony is titled *"Valse,"* and the second movement of the sixth symphony sounds like

a waltz with two extra beats, though the tempo indication does not imply a dance. The element of repetition that Tchaikovsky employs so often in his music is one that enables dancers to find patterns and recognizable rhythms and music, which in turn contribute to the adaptability of the music to be danced. When combining this feature with beautiful melodies, it is then no wonder why Tchaikovsky's ballet music is so popular, successful and memorable to this day.

Naming movements or writing titles for pieces was something that made Tchaikovsky uncomfortable, to say the least. He hated the idea of associating extra musical thoughts to his music. He regretted pieces like *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture, Francesca da Rimini* and *Manfred Symphony* because they had names that revealed what the music was about rather than allowing the listeners to come up with their idea about the music. Of the fifth symphony, Tchaikovsky said that he loathed it. Not because it had suggestive titles, but because he thought the music and therefore himself was insincere, though the premiere lead by him in St. Petersburg in 1888 was a success, at least from the audience's perspective, since the critics thought it was unworthy of Tchaikovsky. He wrote the following note to his patroness, Nadezhda von Meck:

There is something repellent in it, some over exaggerated color, some insincerity of fabrication which the public instinctively recognizes. It was clear to me that the applause and ovations referred not to this but other works of mine, and that the symphony itself would never please the public. All this causes a deep dissatisfaction with myself.

In 1889, when Tchaikovsky went to Hamburg for the premiere of the fifth symphony, he found Brahms staying in the same hotel as he was, and Brahms decided to stay an extra day in town to listen a rehearsal of the new symphony. At first neither Brahms nor the players liked the finale, but a week later Tchaikovsky reported to his brother Modest that they gave him an ovation, and Tchaikovsky started loving his piece again.

The second movement, titled "*Andante cantabile, con alcuna licenza"* features the horn, playing one of the most memorable melodies in symphonic literature for that instrument (See Figure 2.1). The structure of the movement is that of an ABA form. The movement begins with the strings, playing the same b-minor chord with which the first movement ended, providing a sense of continuation and connectivity between movements. There are two main themes in the "A" section of the movement: the melody of the horn in the beginning, and the melody that the oboe plays in the "Con Moto" at measure 24, which becomes a full melody at letter B, which can be fully seen in Figure 2.2 above.

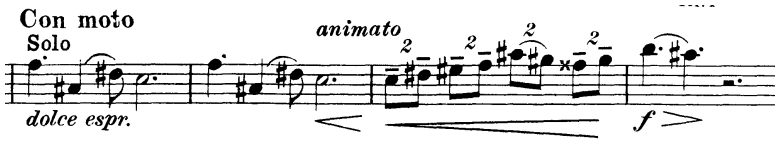


Figure 2.5 Oboe solo. 2nd movement. Measures 24-27

The “B” section of the movement contrasts with a melody given to the clarinet. This is passed through different instruments as it gains momentum until suddenly there is a huge interruption of the “fate” motif in triple forte, as a somber reminder that the horn melody did not solve matters, emotionally speaking. Following this “interruption,” the “A” section returns with the first violins playing the horn melody, with a countermelody in the oboe and pizzicato accompaniment in the strings. By a similar fashion of repetition, other instruments start joining the orchestration and the passage develops almost exactly as Figure 2.2, but now the violins are playing up an octave; the starting dynamic is *fff* instead of *p;* the horns are playing sixteenths instead of eighth-notes as their meter has changed to 4/4. The climax of this movement occurs at the *Molto più andante*, where the dynamic reaches *ffff,* the loudest point in the entire symphony. And once more, when this music is arriving at a familiar, expected beautiful moment, Tchaikovsky frustrates it with another iteration of the “fate” motive that explodes in *fff,* in sharp contrast with the immediately previous music, which was relaxing and winding down to a *piano*. Following this, the primary melody from the beginning returns, partially, and the movement ends calmly, with only the clarinets and the strings playing in *ppp* dynamics. Notice here the choice of instruments. In some way

it feels as if Tchaikovsky is “erasing” the opening of the symphony, as the clarinets play the only melody there is (a happy, hopeful one) and the strings hold a D Major chord that fades into nothing.

The third movement is a charming Waltz. Knowing Tchaikovsky’s inclination for ballet music and cross referencing the emotional content of the symphony thus far, one cannot help but to wonder if this movement means an escape from reality and pure enjoyment of beautiful music… It certainly appears that way, until the very end where Tchaikovsky wrote eight measures of the “fate” motif, reminding us “alla Beethoven” that when there is a darker thread as a main theme of a work, the “happy” moments are all but counted. Structurally, this movement also presents an “ABA” form in the key of A-Major, and it includes a Coda section. Tchaikovsky makes use of hemiolas extensively in the “B” section, and the style of the movement changes from waltz to scherzo. This music sounds and feels very different as the written meter never changes, but it is written as if it was in 4/4. At the return of the “A” section, Tchaikovsky brings back the theme of the waltz while he sustains the scherzo as accompaniment.

The fourth movement also begins with the “fate” motif. This time it is fully harmonized and treated under a very different light starting with the key, which is the parallel major of the symphony, E-Major. At this point in the symphony this theme has been transformed into a positive force that lifts the experience of fate from previous movements. It is, in a manner of speaking, Tchaikovsky’s triumph at demonstrating that

he was not finished as a composer. It may also mean the composer finally accepting his homosexuality. Despite the meaning that one may choose, what may feel more apparent is the fact that this “victory” seems hollow, as John Warrack suggests. He argues that “until the finale, the symphony has embodied a nature fundamentally unhappy.” As the music advances, it becomes more intense, more driven, louder and faster, having turned upside down any ill-fated outcome.

Tchaikovsky uses a quasi-sonata form in this movement. What makes it similar to the sonata form is that there is a recognizable first/main theme, a development and a coda. However, the second theme is not treated in the expected key at the recapitulation, and the coda seems unable to find a way to end the piece, as it goes through five different tempo sections. Finally, the piece ends in E-Major, with *ffff*, marking the second loudest point in the whole symphony, with the trumpets and oboes blasting through the fate motif in a triumphant way.

***

Johannes Brahms was a very conscientious composer; he believed firmly in musical form and he was a master of counterpoint writing. His music reveals the hand of someone who is very methodical and intellectual. The way he writes music is as logical as it is inspired. A protégé of Robert Schumann, Brahms was proclaimed to be the successor of Beethoven.

When Brahms was born (1833), a mere six years had passed since Beethoven's death. No living composer could possibly feel at ease at the time. Brahms, despite being the genius he was, was no exception to this fact. Before he could finish his first symphony, he felt "a giant" marching behind him. He was even careful to avoid writing string quartets as well, since that genre was also conquered by Beethoven.

Written between the months of June and October in 1877, Brahms' second symphony did not have to wait a long time to be finished, as was the case with his first symphony, which took him twenty years to complete, the reason being the palpable presence of Beethoven. Music publishers were even questioning themselves and Brahms if he was ever going to produce a symphony. Nevertheless, in 1877, after a well received performance of the first symphony, Brahms felt confident and ready to write a second symphony. However, before publishing, Brahms made sure to play it (or parts of it at least) to some of his closest friends in whom he would find critique and support. Clara Schumann wrote in 1877 the following entry in her diary when she got to hear Brahms play the symphony on the piano for her:

Johannes came this evening and played me the first movement of his Second Symphony in D Major, which greatly delighted me. I find it in invention more significant than the first movement of the First Symphony… I also heard a part of the last movement and am quite overjoyed with it. With this symphony he will have a more telling success with the public as well than he did with the First, much as musicians are captivated by the latter through its inspiration and wonderful working-out…

Brahms' second symphony was written in Pörtschach, Austria, a place bathed in sunlight, with a beautiful lake. Brahms visited this town between the summers of 1877 and 1879. It is possible that the surroundings had some influence on the pastorale-like qualities of the symphony, as it is in fact sometimes compared with Beethoven's *Pastorale* symphony, which coincidentally was written under similar settings. The difference between Beethoven's sixth and Brahms' second symphonies is that Brahms' music is not attempting to evoke nor portray the surrounding nature.

The music:

Brahms connects the movements of this symphony through the use of motifs in a similar fashion as Schumann does in his fourth symphony. The keys of the movements within the symphony also provide structural information as to how Brahms conceived the music. For instance, the motif upon which the symphony is built can be heard as soon as the piece begins, in the cellos (Figure 2.6).

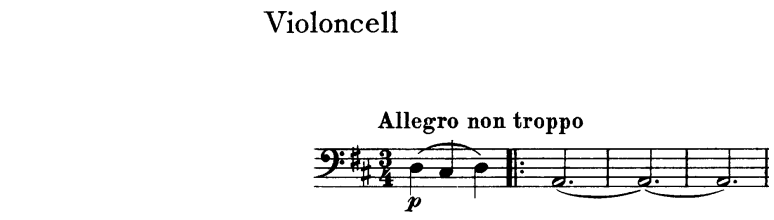


Figure 2.6 Beginning of symphony

The notes D-C#-D shown above make the foundation of the whole work and this progression can be heard and identified throughout the piece with different pitches, instruments, ranges, inversions and rhythms.

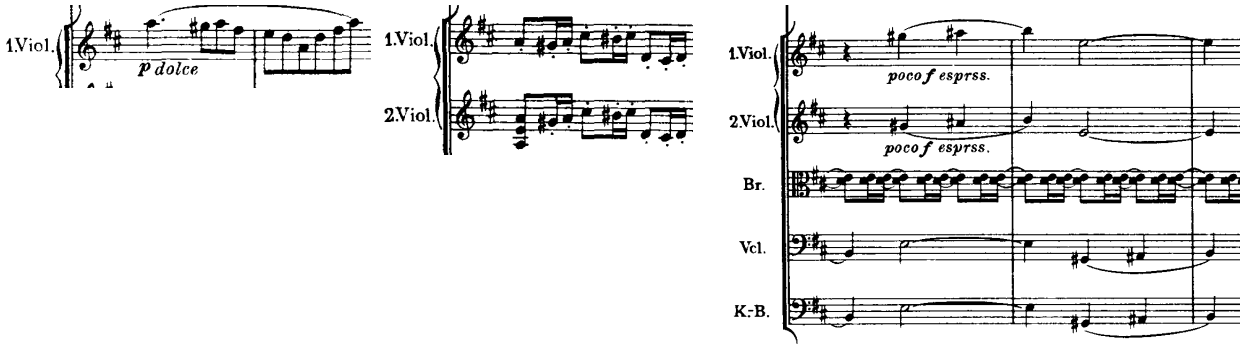


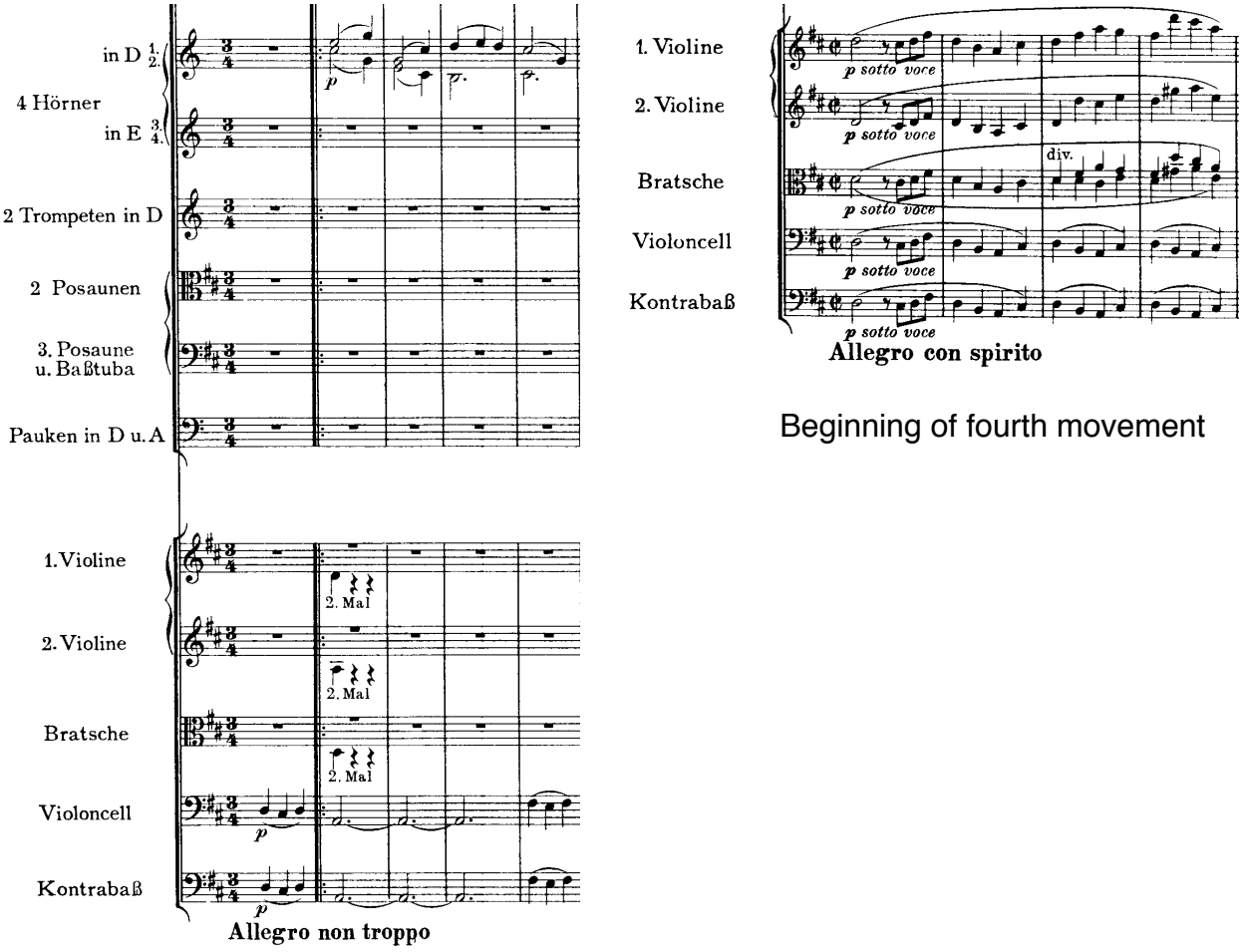
Figure 2.7 Modifications from main motif

Left: m. 44

Center: m. 131

Right: m. 137-138. Notes' intervals have been modified, but the gesture of the three quarters followed by the half note remain.

Brahms links the movements together by using this motif. Not only does it appear in different forms within the movements, but constantly through them as well. We can also notice how he took the first four notes from the beginning D-C#-D-(F#) and used this to start both the first and last movements.



Beginning of fourth movement

Beginning of the first movement

Figure 2.8 Comparison between beginnings of 1st and 4th movements

An interesting instrumentation choice that Brahms makes in the first movement is the use of trombones with tuba. Out of the four symphonies Brahms wrote, the second symphony is the only one that has a tuba part. The other three symphonies use trombones, however not in all movements. In the first and fourth symphonies Brahms uses the trombones only in the last movement, and it is inevitable to think that there is a reference to Beethoven's fifth and the fact that he uses them for the first time only in the last movement as well. The use of the tuba in the second symphony provided Brahms with the ability to sustain better long notes (pedal tones) while the trombones play harmonies as in the second movement (Figure 2.9). It also allowed to create a darker-color-harmonic progression as displayed in the first movement (Figure 2.10).

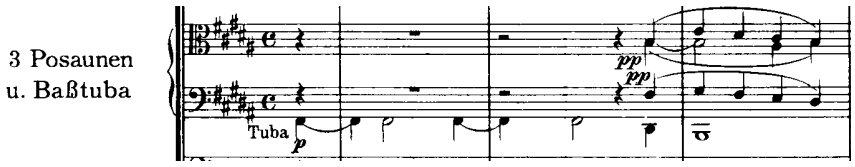


Figure 2.9

Beginning, 2nd mov

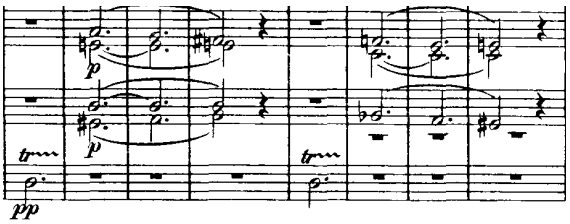


Figure 2.10 First movement. Measures 33-40 (trombone and tuba entrance, with timpani at bottom)

Another Brahmsian feature is his instrumentation treatment. This is perhaps what sets his music apart from Beethoven and Mozart. Whereas the former two tend to treat

the winds and the strings as separate groups that typically answer to one another, Brahms mixes timbres between the sections, thereby creating a new type of sonority. In Figure 2.11 we can appreciate how a given texture like m.54-55 in the horns in D and violins is combined, and in the following two measures this same music is given to the flutes and oboes with violas.

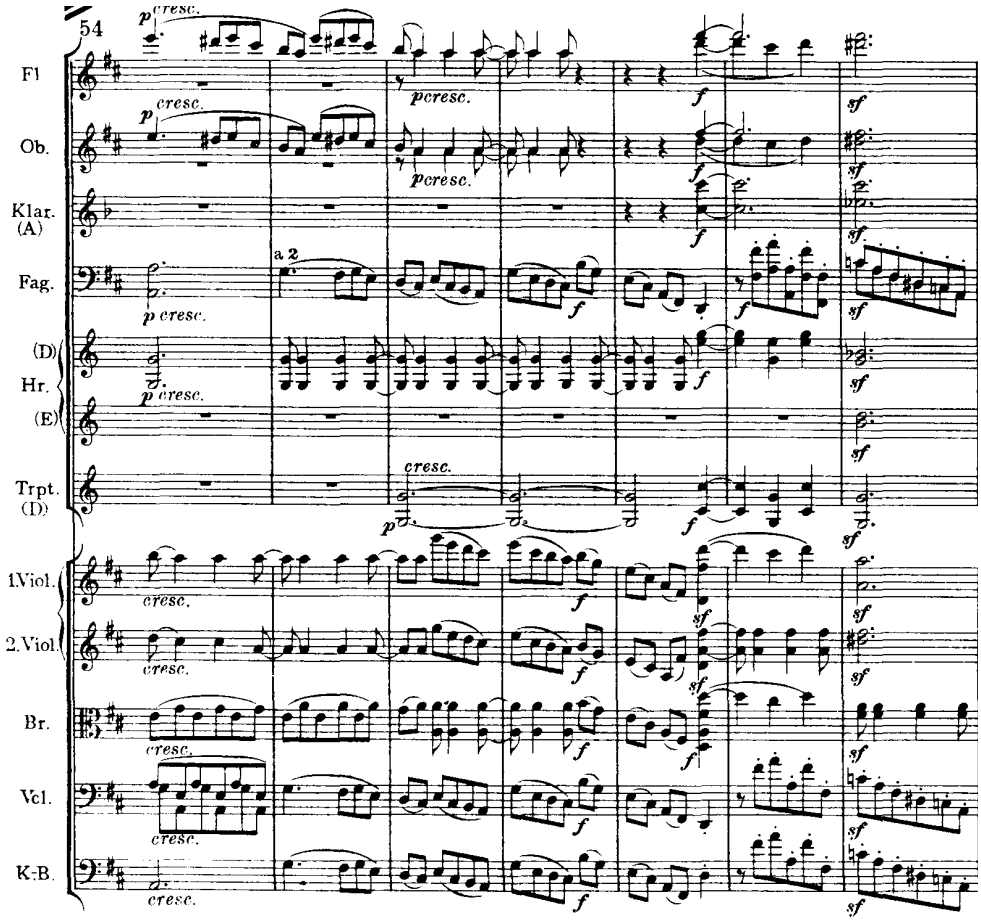


Figure 2.11 1st Movement, measures 54-60

Brahms, a classicist, was very orderly and structured in his compositions. Although he always had in mind the structural clearness of previous composers such as Mozart, Beethoven and Bach, his use of meter displacement became a very distinctive method of composition of his music. This makes his music particular because it does not sound like it appears on the score. A quick glance suffices to realize that the two are not reflections of one another. Downbeats are typically the strongest beats on every measure, yet Brahms displaces and relocates them in weak beats, therefore creating a disorienting feeling, yet managing to do it so cleverly that the move is not noticeable to the listener. In other words, what sounds like a downbeat is a second (weak) beat. Notice the f marked on the second (weak) beat in the winds, and then the ff at m.152.

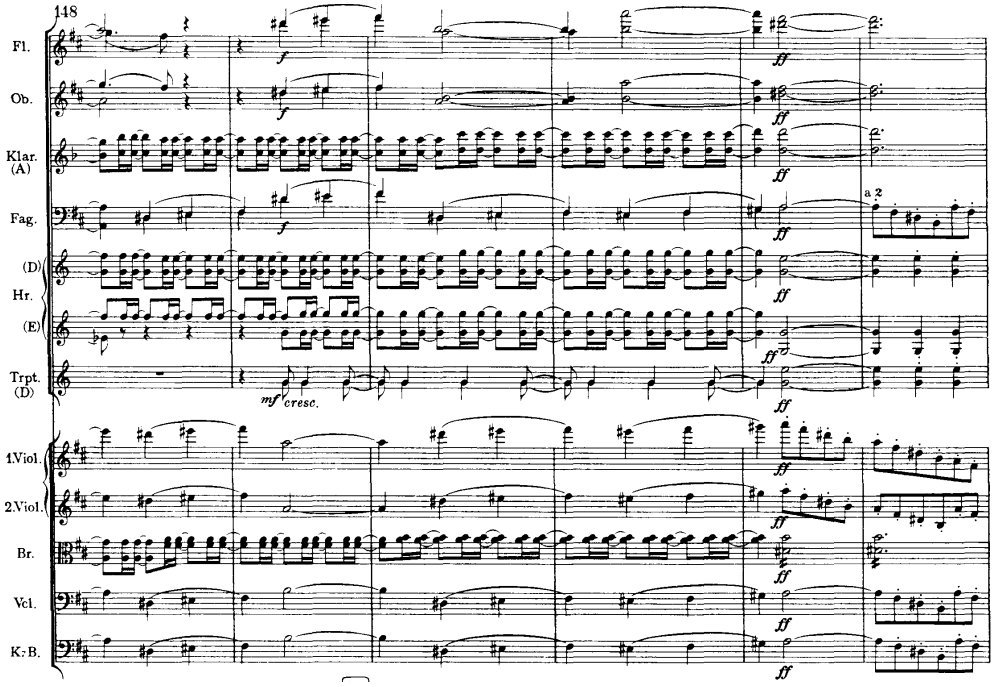


Figure 2.12 1st Movement, measures 148-153

The relentless rhythm played by the clarinets, horns and violas contributes to the "downbeat and beat confusion," as it not only repeats itself but also the ties chaining together the rhythmic cells are placed between weak rhythms and across bar lines.

Music from other sources:

This symphony makes use of one of the most memorable tunes in the world, the famous lullaby. Brahms took his Wiegenlied Op. 49 No.4 and turned it into the beautiful second theme of the first movement.

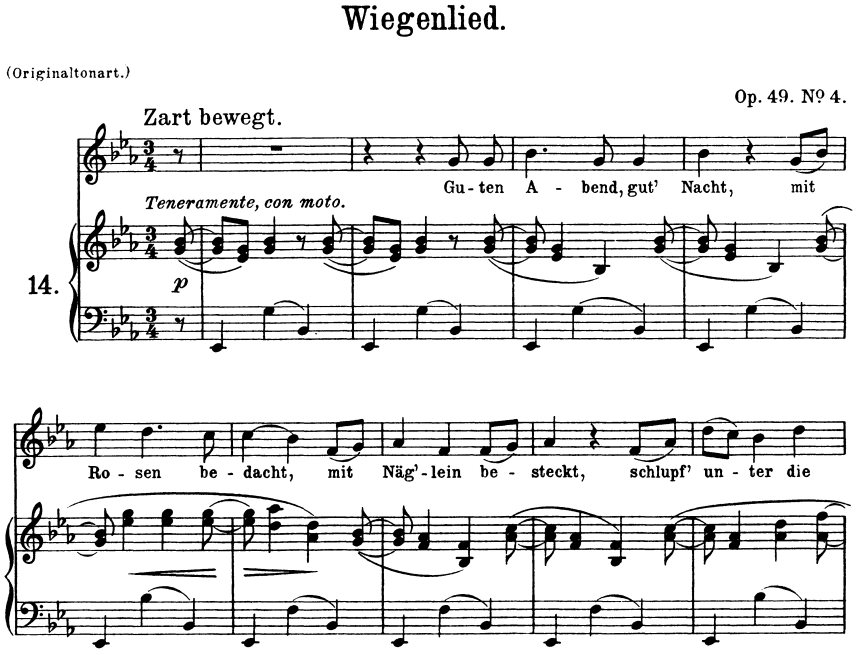


Figure 2.13 *Wiegenlied*. Op. 49. No. 4

The lullaby became the following example, played by violas, cellos and bass on m. 82-86:

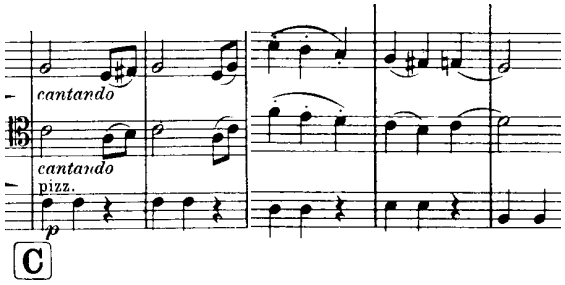
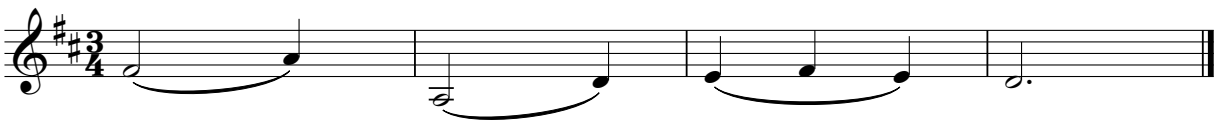


Figure 2.14 1st Movement, measures 82-86

Brahms respected Beethoven deeply, and he used elements in his music to pay homage to him, such as the principal melody from the last movement of his first symphony, clearly taken and transformed from the last movement of Beethoven's ninth. Indeed, what Beethoven had achieved with his music across all the genres that he ventured in was nothing short of miraculous, not to mention that he got stone-deaf as he was producing a very large output of his music. Brahms once confessed to a young woman named Anna Ettlinger, smiling to her: *"You've discovered my secret! That is what I have always done, I've always taken something of Beethoven's and inverted it."* A very clear instance in which there is no question of relationship between Brahms' second symphony and Beethoven's Eroica happens during the first entrance of horns, at the very beginning of the piece, and the beginning of the Eroica symphony. The melody is almost the same for the first four measures, and both pieces share the 3/4 meter.

Brahms:



Beethoven:

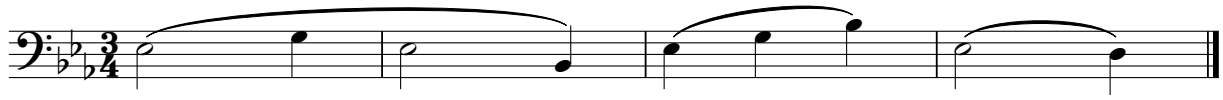
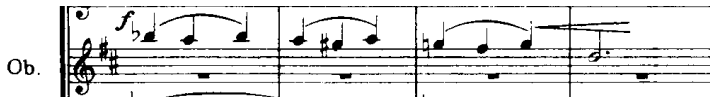


Figure 2.15 Comparison between Brahms' 2nd and Beethoven's 3rd symphonies

In addition, it is possible to see how some rhythmic ideas, pitches, and also the key of the second symphony found their way into other works of Brahms. This is the case of the Violin Concerto, op. 77, which was composed only a year later, in 1878, also in Pörstchach. Both beginnings sound similar, and later on both pieces share passages in common, especially in terms of rhythm. There is in fact speculation whether the violin concerto was started after the second symphony was finished. Following the completion of the first symphony and its triumphant performances, Brahms felt very invigorated and motivated to dive in and compose his second symphony, and it is possible that the violin concerto saw its beginnings at the same time as the second symphony was being created. A third connection, albeit small, could be found between a short melody that the oboe has in the first movement of Brahms' second symphony and the third movement of Mahler's fifth symphony, in which the horns play the same melody as the oboe.

Brahms. Symphony No. 2. 1st Movement, m.254-257:



Mahler. Symphony No. 5. 3rd Movement, m. 414-418:

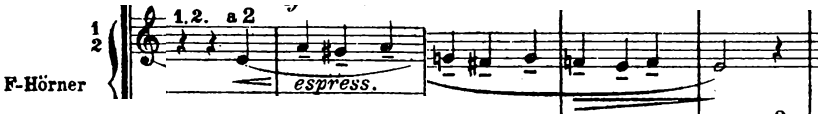


Figure 2.16 Comparison between Brahms' 2nd and Mahler's 5th symphonies

Another connection between these two composers also appears between the last movement of Brahms (Left) and the first movement of Mahler's first symphony (Right).

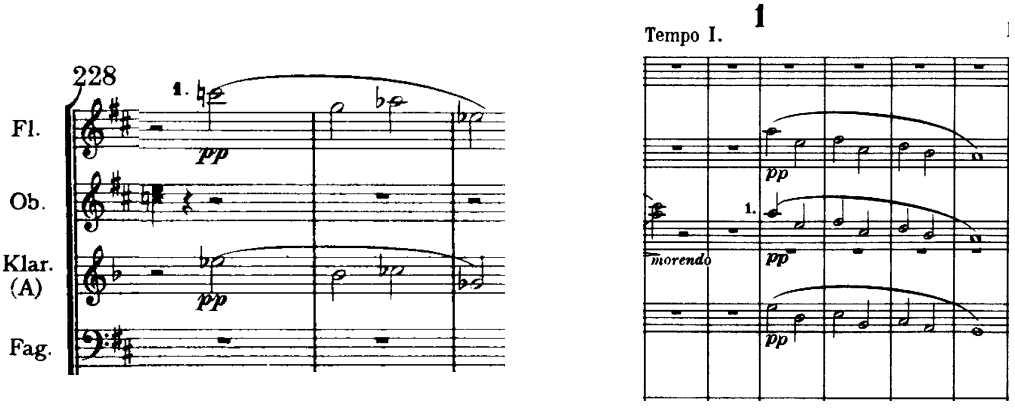


Figure 2.17 Comparison between Brahms's 2nd and Mahler's 1st symphonies

It is possible that Mahler took this idea from Brahms' second symphony, as Mahler's was written mostly in 1888. Like Brahms and Beethoven, Mahler too was surrounded by nature when he composed his fifth symphony as well as many of his other works.

Written in B Major and in 4/4, the second movement starts in what at first glance seems to be very contrasting to the music presented in the previous movement. However, there are traces of the lullaby motif embedded (in disguise) in the second theme of the second movement at rehearsal B.

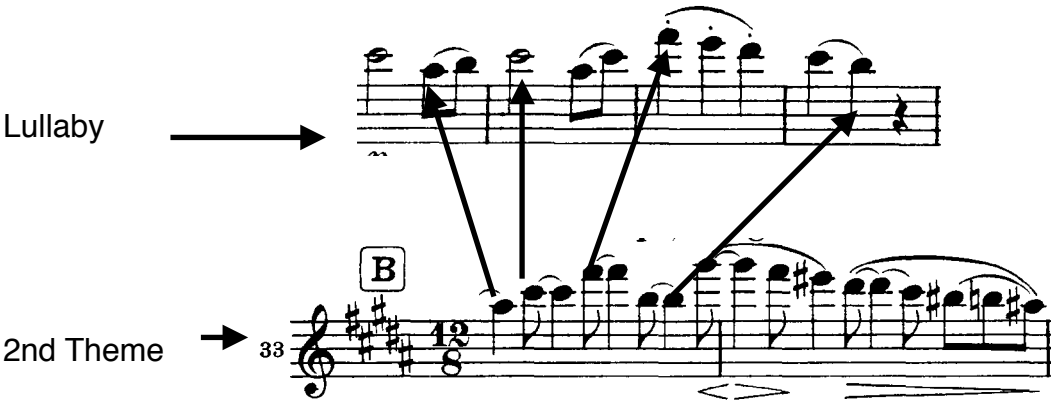


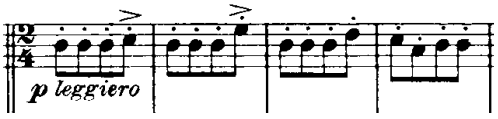
Figure 2.18 Lullaby motif transformed into the second theme

These two examples are played by the flute. Above: 1st movement. Rehearsal D, measure 102-105.

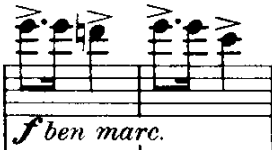
Below: 2nd movement. Rehearsal B.

The development section of this movement is also derived from the main motif. This time, the three notes are all ascending, and they are scattered throughout this section until the arrival of the recapitulation, now converted into triplets in the opening meter of 4/4. The overall structure of this movement is sonata form with coda. However, it differs from the traditional form because it omits the secondary theme in the recapitulation.

The third movement is the shortest piece of the symphony. Its structure is ABACA, and it is a set of dances. Section A is a Ländler, a traditional German-Austrian-Swiss dance in a moderate tempo in 3/4 meter. Section B is a Galop, which is a popular dance in a fast 2/4 time. It typically displays the rhythm of dotted-eighth and sixteenth note, which occurs at rehearsal A.



Beginning of the Galop



The traditional rhythm of the Galop at rehearsal A

Figure 2.19 Galop theme

There is an ingenious feature hidden in the example above. Brahms constructed the Galop by using the melody of the beginning of the movement. All one has to do to

find it is to see those four measures and substitute the meter and rhythm to those of the beginning. The middle section A comes back, and it changes the mood as it takes the music into section C, which has a feeling of a scherzo character. Then, the final iteration of section A returns, but in F-sharp Major, which was not expected but provides a pleasing change of tonality, which then is resolved back to the home key of G Major.

As described before, the fourth movement begins with yet another transformation of the original motif of the symphony. It is written in sonata form in the home key of D-Major, drawing the overall key progression of D-Major / B-minor / G-Major / D-Major of the whole symphony. The fourth movement, marked *Allegro con spirito*, is the only symphonic movement with that name across all of his four symphonies. The affect of this movement is of a relentless, boiling-point momentum that starts as if it was put under a lid by beginning *piano sotto voce*. The *Coda* of this movement is composed "alla Mozart-Beethoven" because the music seems to not want to end and instead comes up with a new idea at the end of each coda section. This comes as no surprise given Brahms' nature to look back to composers before him and incorporating some of their traits into his own compositions. There are three distinct sections of music within the *Coda*, and each one propels the music forward and creates momentum that ends the symphony in a very exciting way.

Some scholars believe that the inner movements of the second symphony have been judged to be lesser members of the work because the outer movements are

longer and more developed. Nevertheless, the third movement, which is the shortest one was vividly applauded and demanded to be repeated at the premiere. As far as the order of the movements and their chronological composition, it is difficult to ascertain as to when or how they came to be. Brahms typically destroyed his sketches, as well as pieces that he thought were not good enough. Despite this fact, scholars believe that the outer movements of this symphony were composed first, and then the inner two.

The second symphony was premiered by the Vienna Philharmonic at the Vienna Musikverein, with Hans Richter on the podium, on December 30, 1877 although it was scheduled to be performed on the 9th. The reason why it got moved was because the musicians were too busy learning Wagner's *Rheingold.*

RECITAL 3 PROGRAM

A Midsummer Night's Dream Concert Overture. Op. 21 — Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)

Symphony No. 4 in D minor, Op. 120 — Robert Schumann (1810-1856)

RECITAL 3 PROGRAM NOTES

A Midsummer Night's Dream Concert Overture was composed when Mendelssohn was only seventeen years old, and it sounds as if it was made by a fully matured, well seasoned composer because of the highly imaginative, colorful, and descriptive nature of the piece. As soon as the music begins, Mendelssohn transports the listeners to Athens, where the action of the drama takes place, by means of four chords heard in the winds, almost as if saying "once upon a time…" In the music one hears fairies flying around in the fast-paced notes on the violins; the enchanting love theme introduced by the strings, and even Bottom's donkey's brays with the whole orchestra. Originally conceived as a piano piece, and performed with sister Fanny, Mendelssohn recognized the quality of the overture and quickly decided to orchestrate it. The overture was premiered in Poland on 20 February 1827, followed by Mendelssohn's premiere of his concerto for two pianos, which featured him and Carl Loewe as soloists, then Weber's *Konzertstück* for piano and orchestra with Mendelssohn as soloist (who played from memory), and finally with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, with Mendelssohn joining the first violins.

A Midsummer Night's Dream musicalizes the ideas of Shakespeare's play and its characters, and it quickly became one of Mendelssohn's most famous works, along with his string octet, which he wrote when he was sixteen. Both pieces remain today as two of the greatest musical pieces any composer has ever written at that age. This overture

later became part of the incidental music that Mendelssohn composed for the play. Remarkably, seventeen years passed between the overture and the creation of the rest of the incidental music, and the music fits together beautifully, as if no time had passed.

A child prodigy, Felix Mendelssohn was born into a prominent Jewish family who valued education, music, and the arts. Mendelssohn was the the second of four children. His early musical accomplishments revealed quickly that he was greatly gifted, to the point of being compared with none other than Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, both at the intellectual and creative level as well as a virtuoso performer, since he could also sit down at the piano and improvise anything he wanted. Like Mozart, Mendelssohn also composed symphonies in his childhood, but unlike him, Mendelssohn's parents did not want to exploit his talents in the same way Mozart's father did. Young Felix enjoyed a different kind of protection, both financially and intellectually as well, since he was much more reserved when considering publication of his works, as he did not need to produce music in order to make a living. Mendelssohn's sister, Fanny, was also greatly gifted as a musician, however, her talents did not see the same light of day as Felix, because it was inappropriate for a woman to show that kind of qualities in public during their time. Mendelssohn's short life was not an impediment for him to accomplish many things; he was a great conductor, composer, violinist, pianist, organist, and painter. His family's wealth and status provided him with a private orchestra in his house for which he could compose and perform his music for the intellectual elite of Berlin. Besides being a genius composer, Mendelssohn was famous because of his use of a baton as a

conductor, which was a novelty in his time, and to this day he is universally recognized for the revival of Johann Sebastian Bach's music after a very successful performance of Saint Matthew's Passion, which awoke interest in Bach's music across Europe.

A Midsummer Night's Dream Concert Overture ends with the same chords heard in the beginning. One cannot help but to wonder: was it all a dream?

The music:

This overture makes use of sonata form structure. It begins, as mentioned above, with four chords played in the woodwinds plus the horns. Their progression E (implied because of the key signature; otherwise this chord could be C# minor)-B-A minor-E constructed in a high register with fermatas on every chord suggest the beginning of trance-like state, as if the listener is either entering a magical realm, or perhaps falling asleep into one. The tempo mark says *Allegro di molto*, but these chords are out of tempo. If one hears the first chord as a C# minor (tonic missing), then it is possible to hear a descending melodic line from C#-B-A-E, which almost matches the descending line of the pitches in the main motif heard in the first violins on m.8. However, it seems more clear that the real harmony of the first measure is that of E Major, as it is put in evidence by noticing the arpeggio that forms with the notes of the first flute, spelling an E Major chord. Moreover, it is important to notice the pitches E-D#-C-B embedded in the opening chords. These four notes will become the main theme heard in the violins. Right after the timeless, held E Major chord in the winds, Mendelssohn breaks this

trance by switching forces and going to the strings exclusively, in the parallel minor and “a tempo.” This passage is but one of the memorable features of this overture, as it is an aural visualization of the fairies flying around. Mendelssohn captured this by use of the staccato eighth-notes in the violins, as if the moving notes in the first violins send the fairies plunging, turning or twisting in mid-air while the second violins sustain a more uniform pattern.

From the start of the piece, it is possible to see that Mendelssohn’s orchestration keeps the winds separated from the strings. This is not to say that throughout the piece they do not play together; rather, one group tends to serve as the accompaniment of the other when they do play together, as in letter A, m.62.

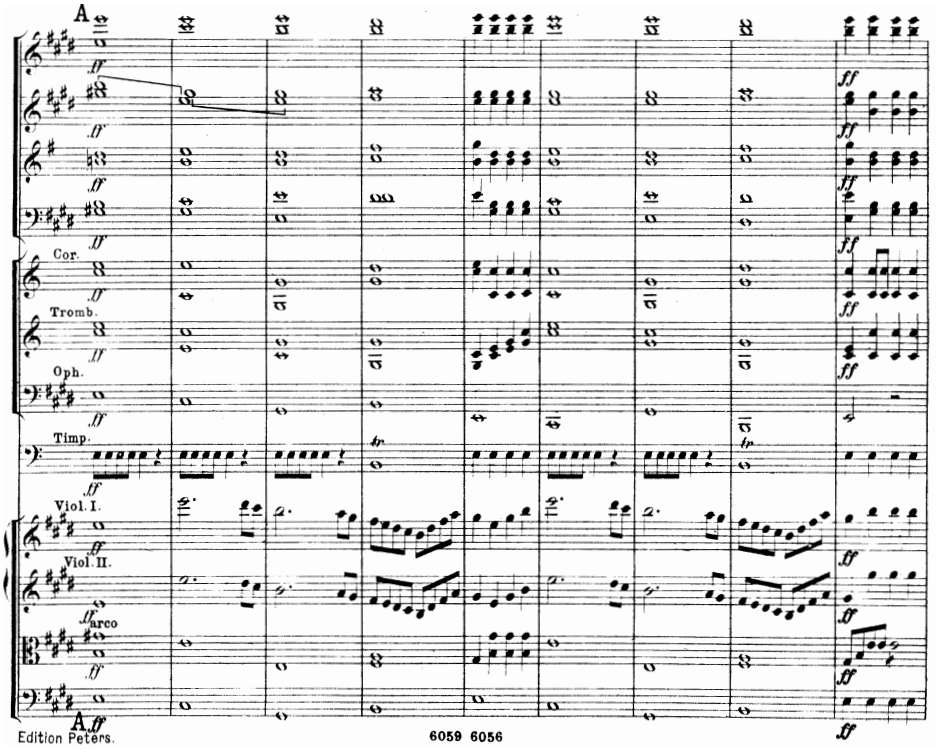


Figure 3.1 Royal Music of the Court of Athens. Measures 62-70

In Figure 3.1 Mendelssohn makes it clear that the melody is in the violins, and the rest of the instruments accompany them. The only time when they become one is in the middle, for one bar (fifth bar of A). This music marks the transition section within the structure of the sonata form, and it is also the moment in which it is clear that we are in the tonic of the piece, E Major. Some aural cues that confirm the departure from the first theme are as follows: the orchestration becomes full, suddenly all instruments are playing, the dynamic is increased from pp to ff at the very start of this section along with an evident rhythmic agitation. Apart from this, on close observation it is possible to find the four descending pitches found in the main motif from the fairy theme in augmentation, plus the arpeggio from the winds in the opening of the piece. These elements are in the violins, from m.2 - m.3 and then the arpeggio on m.5 - m.6. Following this theme, Mendelssohn makes use once more of the descending four note figure in successive entrances in the winds starting at m.78 (Figure 3.2) in augmentation, as the rhythmic values increased to half-notes.

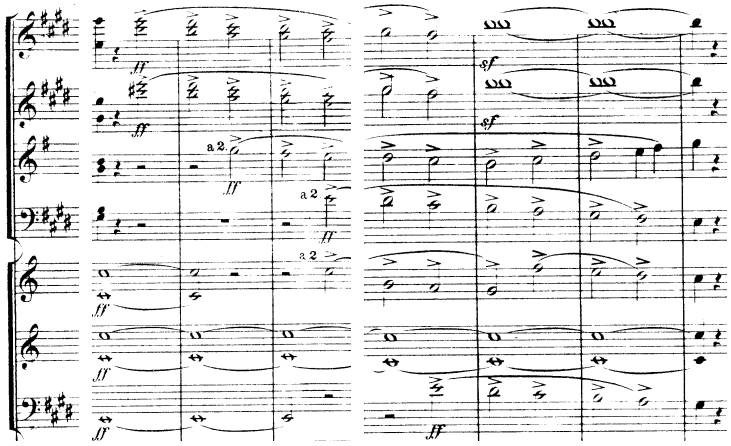


Figure 3.2 Measures 78-84

Later on, Mendelssohn reintroduces the fairies' music with some differences from before. The key is now B major, and all strings play, except for bass. There are also articulation differences with slurred notes plus accompaniment of the winds, who also play long, slurred notes. Though this music is built relatively from a small collection of pitches within a small intervalic range, Mendelssohn makes it appear much deeper by adding the ophicleide, which comes in playing fortissimo while all other instruments play only forte. Also, in this same passage with the aide of the ophicleide, Mendelssohn makes a sequence out of the fairies' music up a step (c# minor), and then modulates once more back to E Major, which is unusual at this point in the music since we are approaching the second key area. The music resolves the harmonic transition by going to a V/V before arriving to the expected V (B Major) for the arrival of the second theme.

The main tetrachord is present in augmentation in the cello eight measures before the second theme, while the violas play a line that derives from the fairies' music. This relates to the beginning of the overture as well, as the opening chords function as an introduction to the theme of the fairies. Both there and here, Mendelssohn makes use of an eight bar phrase before the start of a section of music. The beautiful second theme melody is presented by the violins again, with the violas providing harmonic support along with the flutes while the cello and bass sustain a B pedal. This is the lovers theme. Remarkably, teen-aged Mendelssohn already is showing how to make this appear as a love theme in the score: all instruments are grouped and playing their

independent lines in pairs, as couples. Even the cello and bass who only hold a single note are doing so together. And the violas, of whom there is only one section in the orchestra, are playing in thirds, or better yet, in two voices moving together. (Figure 3.3)

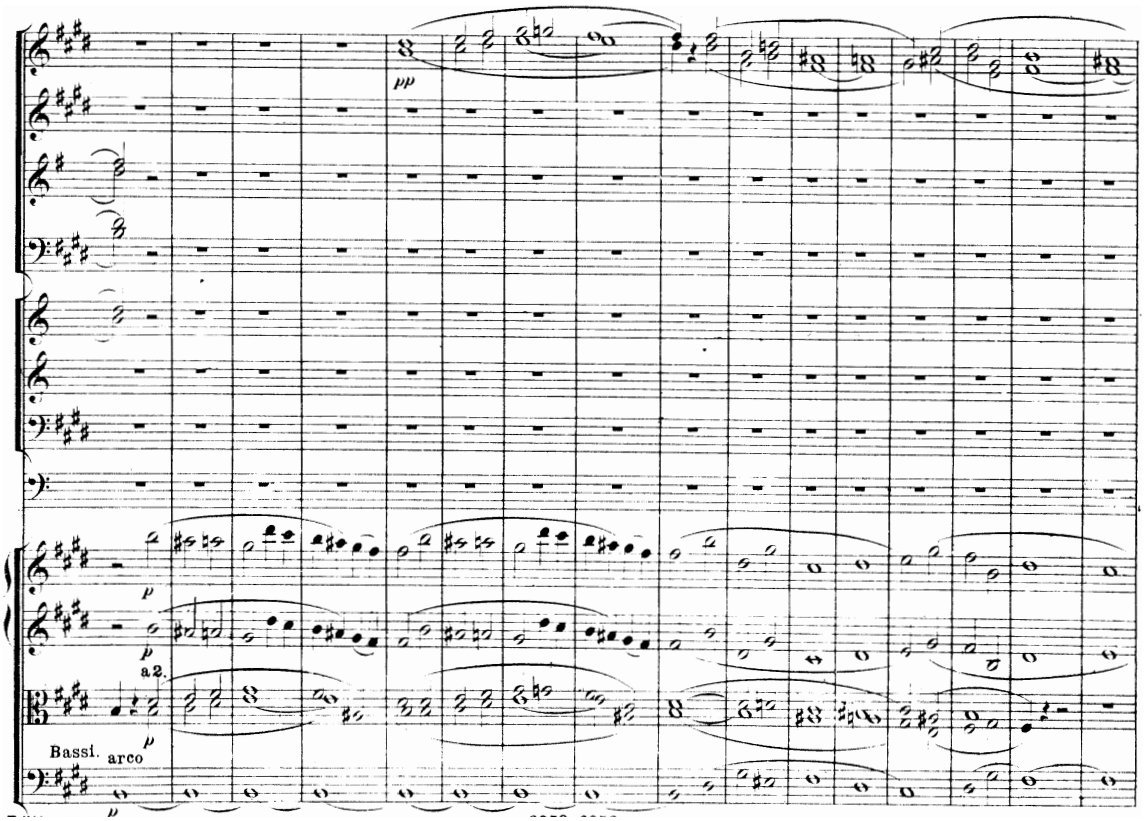


Figure 3.3 Measures 138-153

Once more, embedded in this new theme Mendelssohn used a varied form of the tetrachord found in the opening motive of the fairies' theme. Here it ascends in the violas and the flutes while it descends in the violins. Later on, Mendelssohn introduces three more characters in the music: the workmen (whose music begins with open fifths),

Bottom's donkey braying (by orchestrating an intervalic leap of a Major 9th almost across all instruments, (and later on a 10th) and the hunters (portrayed by the Horn-Trumpet call), on Figure 3.4

Donkey Hunters

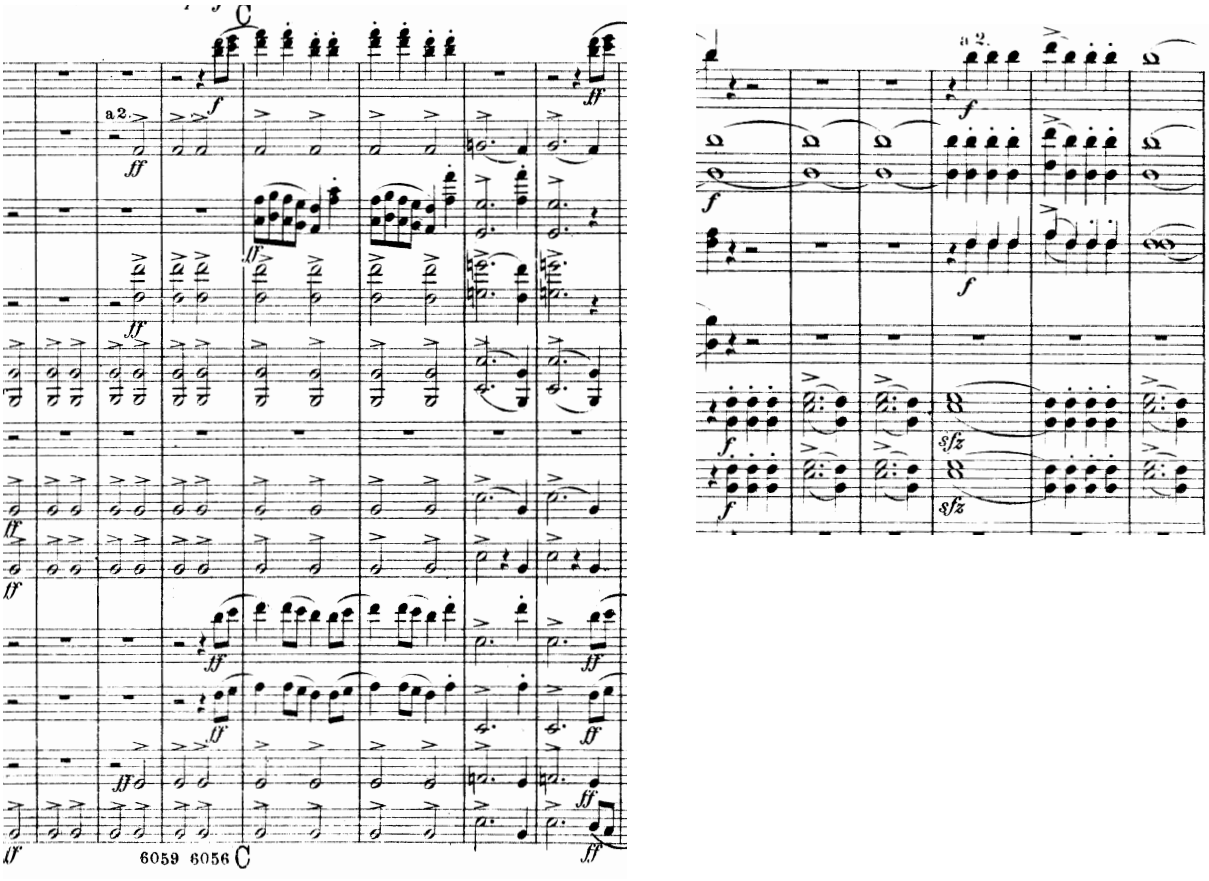


Figure 3.4 Mendelssohn's portrayal of the Donkey braying and the Hunters

Finally, before arriving at the close, Mendelssohn approaches it by adding another iteration of the theme of the court of Athens, this time with the violins reaching a high G# in order to resolve to a PAC in B Major, locking up the chord and key area until

the start of the development section, which begins with the primary theme of the fairies' music, but this time it has suffered a change of mode in it is now in B minor. This differs from the exposition in that there are no chords functioning as the introduction to this theme; and the instrumentation has been modified as well. The winds interject the theme by adding some chords that were not present in the beginning. Also, in the development, the second phrase of the fairy theme is treated as a descending sequence of only the first two measures of the theme, between the first violins, second violins and violas.

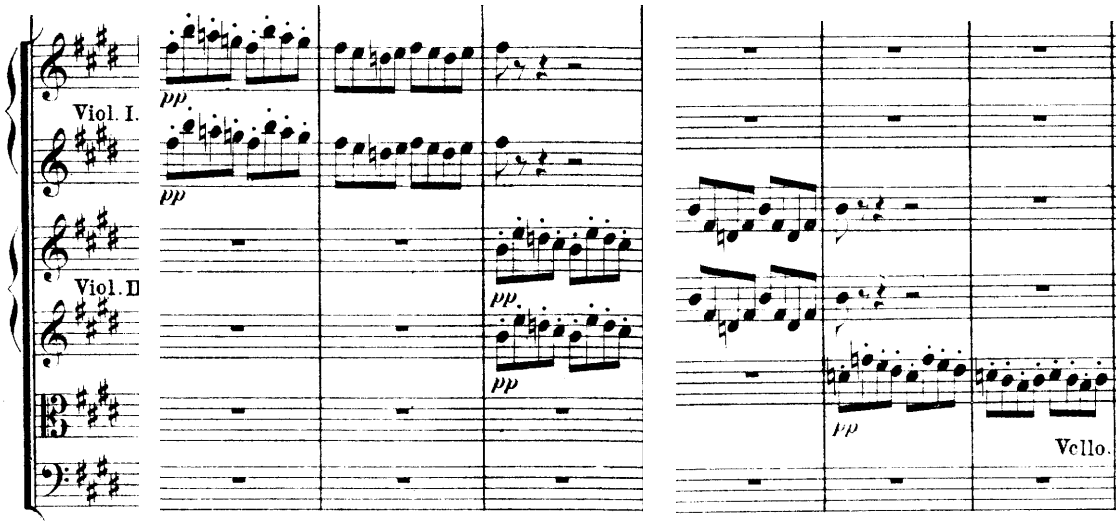


Figure 3.5 Measures 258-263

This could have continued with the cellos, but instead Mendelssohn chose to take the music through G# minor to F# minor with a descending line which he described to his sister Fanny as a caught, buzzing fly.

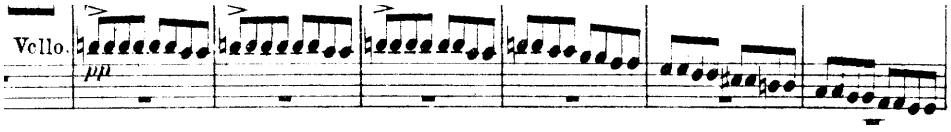


Figure 3.6 Measures 264-269

Once in F# minor, we hear the melodic, ascending arpeggio heard in the opening chords in diminution and stretto, across clarinet, flute, oboe and bassoon. This music continues repeating itself in different tonalities in a rising sequence until the arrival of a more lasting tonal center of D Major. The driving motive throughout this passage continues to be the primary theme of the fairies.

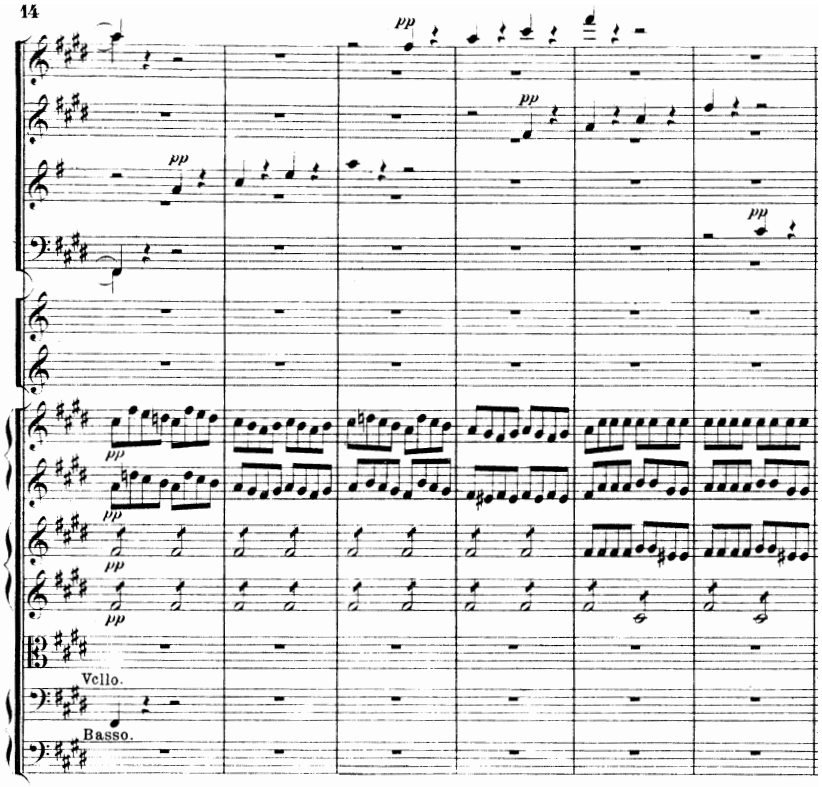


Figure 3.7 Measures 270-275

The retransition (Figure 3.8) begins with one last reference to the lovers' theme but with interruptions, perhaps portraying the characters falling asleep. At this moment, the music is in the key of C# minor. There is no cadence leading into it. The introduction chords come back once more, except this time, there is one major difference here: Mendelssohn builds the first chord from a C#, which is the note that was "missing" in the very beginning of the piece. Is it possible then that the ambiguous, first "incomplete" chord at the start of the piece is a C# minor and not an E Major chord after all? Perhaps it is both, or neither. To make things even more interesting, C# minor happens to be the relative minor of E Major. Coincidence? No! Brilliant!

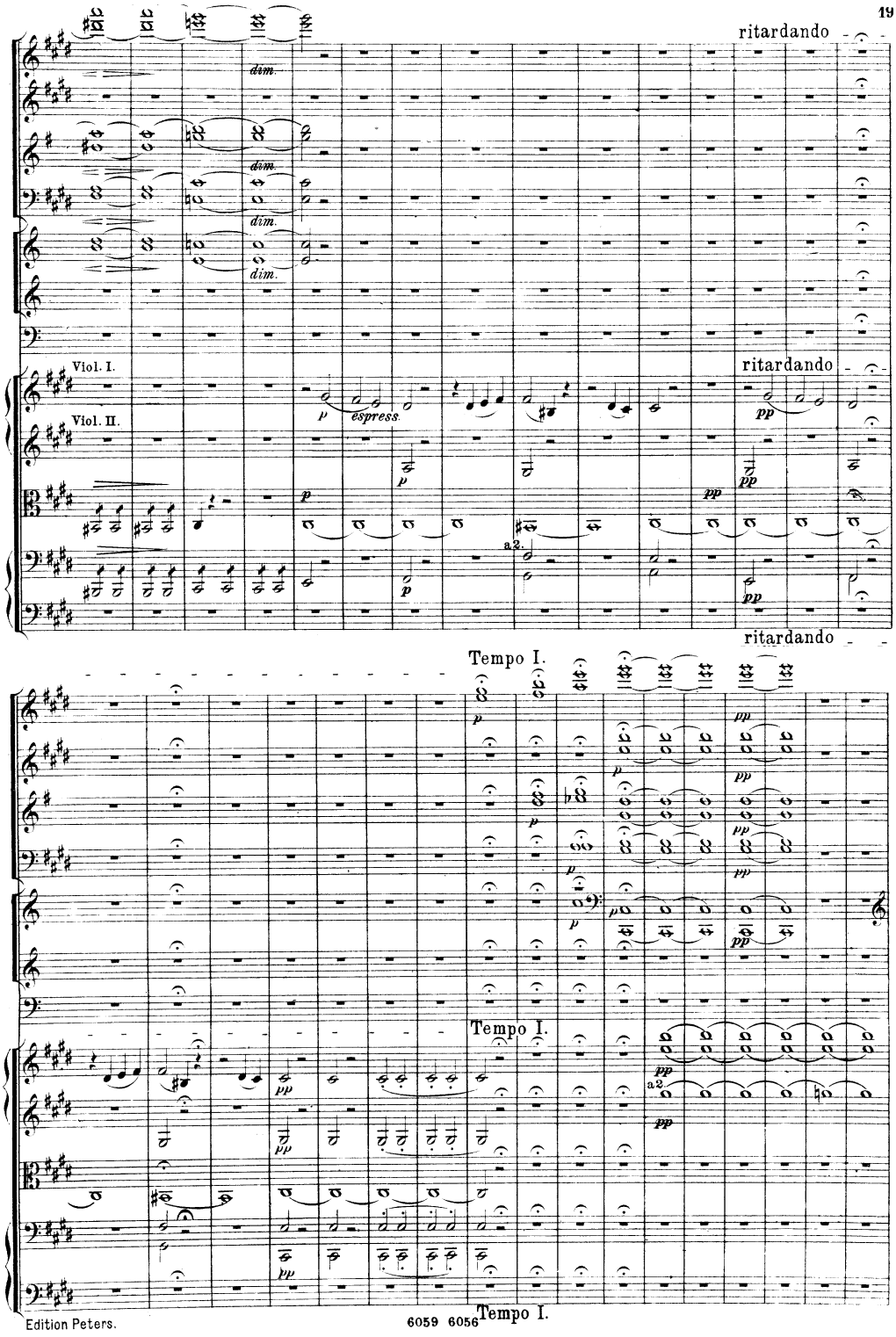


Figure 3.8 Retransition. Starting on the 5th measure of the score. Measures 376-403

Once the principal theme starts again, the music is almost identical as in the beginning. Some of the most important changes are the addition to long, sustained notes in the winds, and the omission of bars 24-40. The timpani also enters, and for a brief moment the music takes a very unexpected harmonic turn into C Major, only to come back to B^7, the dominant of the tonic E Major.

The music takes its natural course through the sonata form structure. The second theme is presented in the tonic, but there is no reprise here of the Royal Music of the Court of Athens. Instead, Mendelssohn brings back the pedal fifths before Bottom's braying, which has been enhanced up to an interval of 11th (in the exposition this music occurred after the second theme). The violins are now playing continuously rather than as a response to one another as in the exposition. Then, seven measures before the start of the close Mendelssohn brings back a fragment of the Royal Music of the Court of Athens. Following this, the music seems to drive forward to an inevitable PAC and end the piece; however, this is elided with the Coda, which brings yet again the primary motif of the fairies, in E minor, as in the beginning of the piece, giving the impression that a *da capo* might have happened. As the music continues on with this motif, Mendelssohn includes again the arpeggios in the winds in diminution and augmentation, and suddenly suspends all motion with an $A\#^{o7}$ chord over a B pedal. From this moment on, the music slows down, weakens, and the instrumentation diminishes as well. Then, Mendelssohn brings back the Royal Music of the Court of Athens in the violins, but marked pp, at a much slower pace, with a rhythm variation (slight augmentation to

quarter-note triplet), thereby changing the sonorous atmosphere and bringing once more a version of the tetrachord C#-B-A-G# hidden in the accompanying winds and the violas, just before the last iteration of the opening chords, which do not start incomplete, as in the beginning. Mendelssohn finally resolves the harmony ambiguity by having the strings hold a complete E Major chord below the first chord of the flutes, confirming that the home key is E Major.

***

Robert and Clara Schumann kept a diary as husband and wife. In it, they made entries about the process of the creation of the fourth symphony. We learn from these notes that Clara was not only recording her husband's progress on the composition but actually being a key inspiration to him.

The year 1840 marks a very special moment in Schumann's life. After courting Clara Wieck in secret in order to avoid her father (who happened to be Schumann's piano teacher), and after a long legal battle preventing them to marry each other, Robert and Clara finally became husband and wife in what nowadays we know as Schumann's "the year of the song." Schumann was ecstatic about the new love and was very inspired to compose. That year he wrote no less than 138 songs. In 1841, this happiness continued and Schumann decided to try his hand at writing symphonies. By then, he was becoming a known composer for smaller works. Beethoven's death was still very recent, which meant that attempting to write a symphony at the time was a rather delicate thing, as it could mean a composer's undoing if it turned out badly. Nevertheless, Schumann's state of mind and heart was strong and inspired. So much so that the year 1841 became his "year of the symphony" since he was able to produce not one but two symphonies. The following quotation comes from a diary entry in March, 1841:

Really, my next symphony will be called Clara, and I will portray her

with flutes, oboes and harps.

Originally, Schumann's symphony was not the fourth to come into existence. It began its life as the second symphony (chronologically speaking) in 1841. Its world premiere was not very well received, and there is also the fact that during the premiere there were other featured performers who overshadowed Schumann's new work, and they were none other than the superstars Clara Schumann and Franz Liszt playing together some piano duets. Witnessing such performers alone was enough to make the symphony a lesser attraction in the eyes of the audience. Following this concert, the symphony was put on hold for ten years, after which the composer returned to it and re-orchestrated it, arguably to make it more robust, or to undermine its previous performance because in his head, the players were not very good. There are other reasons that might explain the nature of some of these scoring changes, and they have to do with how the composer performed as the conductor. Some reports indicate that Schumann was lacking at the podium, hence, when revising the symphony many entrances of instruments became a matter of more than one player per part, thinking that if he as the conductor missed to cue something, there would be less chances that the musicians involved would miss it, assuming they would enter on their own.

Although considered a romantic symphony because of its emotional nature and construction, Schumann's fourth symphony features classical elements in its structure such as the sonata form, which is the blueprint of most symphonies composed during the classicism and beyond. However, Schumann's treatment of this form suggests a different approach, more like that of a *fantasy*, because whereas the sonata form

typically has very clear and defining structural markers, the fantasy lives within that frame but it pushes its boundaries and allows for more freedom to develop or explore tonalities, themes and length, to name a few. Cerny defines the term *fantasy* as a genre in which several thematically related sections occur without pause. The interconnectivity between movements is made possible through the use of key relationships as well as distinct, recurring themes that are transformed as the piece unfolds.

Regarding the title of the piece, the original version of 1841 was called simply "Symphony." After the revision of 1851 was complete and the piece was about to be performed again Schumann decided to change the name to "Symphony Fantasy," perhaps as an attempt to justify the nature of the structure and to make the work more acceptable to the audiences and critics. Nevertheless, just before the revised version got performed again as such, Schumann decided to omit the "fantasy" name from the title, and thus it stayed as we know it today.

Thematic Transformation:

This is the most remarkable aspect of this symphony along with the revised structure changes and the interconnectivity from movement to movement. The new thematic treatment gave way to a more connected sequence of themes that joined together the work as a whole, as virtually every theme develops from something heard before; the orchestration was altered, chords got split between instrumental voices, or

even removed at times; and all the movements of the piece got connected so that they became a one thirty-minute-piece. In the original version of 1841 only the third and fourth movements are played without pause. This structure change alone could suggest that the piece belongs exclusively to the romantic era, but at the same time it contains four movements which follow the common structure of movements within a symphony, that is to say a fast-slow-fast-fast tempo approach, which as we know is an inheritance from the classical period. In this case, both outer movements begin slowly, with a brief introduction. Then, the music changes tempo and stays fast until the end of the movement.

The beginning of the symphony follows the sonata form structure, and it starts with a slow introduction. The exposition contains all the traditional elements within: primary theme, transition, second theme, close.

The following, recurrent motif which develops from the very beginning of the work is carried along the four movements of the symphony.

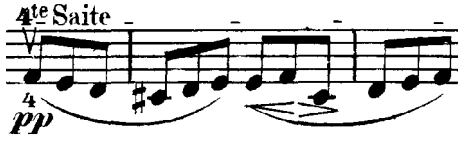


Figure 3.9 1st Movement, measures 2-4 (violin II)

Figure 3.9 is the main motif of the symphony. From it, Schumann creates, expands and transforms the music in ways that invite the listener to understand the

connection from one version of the motif to the next, to the integration of the multi movement setup of the symphony into one continuous movement. One can go even further and dissect this motif by taking the first four descending notes and consider that to be the basic idea of the motif.

The first *Lebhaft* of the symphony features a transformation of the motif where we can identify the four descending notes mentioned above. This is also where the first theme is heard, and it is a result of a transition built into it from the preceding *stringendo*.

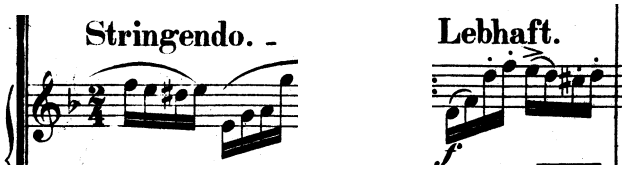


Figure 3.10 1st Movement, measures 25, 29 (violin I)

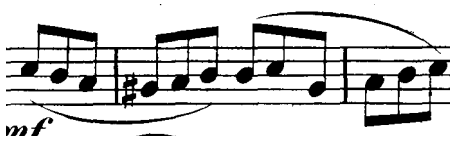


Figure 3.11 From Romanza. Measures 370-372 (violin II)

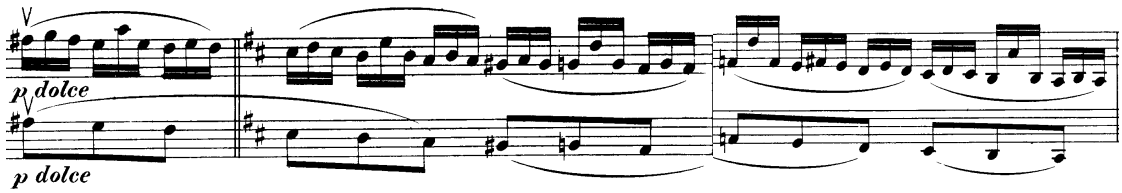


Figure 3.12 From Trio of *Romanza*. Measures 384-386 (violin solo with violin I)

Figures 3.11 and 3.12 display two transformations of the theme. They are both found in the second movement of the symphony. Figure 3.11 has been transposed (in relationship to Figure 3.9, albeit it looks the same). Figure 3.12 features an embellished version of the motif as a solo for violin, accompanied by yet another transformation of the theme, this time as a descending scale. Later, this music becomes the theme of the trio in the third movement

The following examples from two different *Lebhaft* show how the motif has been modified again. Figure 3.13 presents a meter of 3/4, and a key signature of d minor, the tonic of the symphony. In this case the motif has been inverted on the first violin part, while the second violin plays chords on every downbeat. What is nice about this example taken from the scherzo movement is that the accompaniment is also yet another transformation of the motif itself, and it is used in the fourth movement shown in Figure 3.14. However, this is not the first time that the chords made an appearance in the symphony. They go back as early as the third theme of the exposition in the first movement.

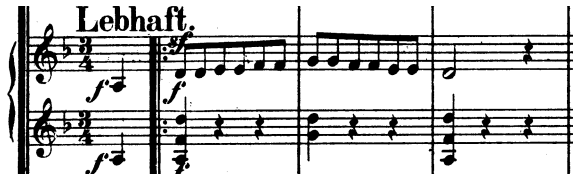


Figure 3.13. From the beginning of the Scherzo.

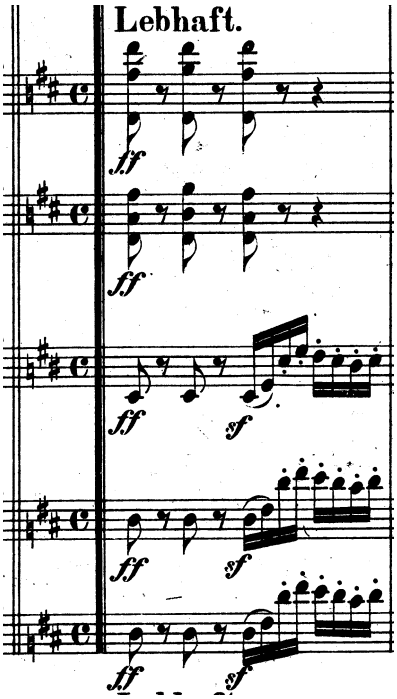


Figure 3.14 From the beginning of the fourth movement. The vertical motion of the chords are a result of the accompaniment figure of the second violins in Figure 3.13.

Other composers before Schumann employed this technique, and it proved to be a most successful way of interconnecting the movements of the symphony. Most notably, Beethoven's 5th symphony's well known opening four-note motif is heard in different places throughout the work. Not only did this mechanism provide a

connection or a sense of togetherness from movement to movement, but in so doing it created a feeling of unity of the work. Coincidentally, Beethoven also connects the third and fourth movements of his symphony so that there is no pause in between them. Later composers such as Berlioz also utilized a similar compositional technique in order to invite the listeners to identify associations between the motifs and how and when they are used, and even what they mean, as in his *Symphonie Fantastique*. Schumann went even further with this process, because the different themes of the whole symphony are stemmed from one original idea stated right in the beginning of the first movement, between the bassoons, second violins and violas.

A fair amount of musicians -composers and conductors- believe and defend that the original version of the symphony is better than the revised one from 1851. Many have argued incessantly both for and against both versions. Johannes Brahms declared that the original version of Schumann's fourth symphony is better and in fact, Brahms had it published after Schumann's death. Other composers, such as Gustav Mahler, re-orchestrated parts of the re-orchestration, because it was a general opinion that Schumann was not a good orchestrator. In fact this is an issue that we deal with in our day. Many of the great conductors end up doing something like what Mahler did, changing dynamics, adding or removing notes, rhythms or entire melodies to instruments who do not have them in order to improve the orchestration. Then, on the other hand there are people like Leonard Bernstein who believe otherwise:

Who said Schumann couldn't orchestrate?!?

-Leonard Bernstein, on his score, p. 49.

Beethoven and Schubert are present in Schumann's idiom. Where Beethoven can be understood as a dramatist and Schubert as a lyricist, Schumann's music results as a combination of both. The melodies that Schumann writes have an inner quality of urgency, a certain feeling of declamatory reflexion.

The Structure:

As was mentioned before, one of the modifications between the 1841 and 1851 versions of this symphony is the interconnectivity between movements. Originally only the scherzo and finale were connected. After the revision, all movements became connected, which is not the same as to say "played without pause." This is an interesting concept because it speaks about the originality of the composition, and the urgency of having to come up with something new, different from what Beethoven did in his symphonies. The typical structure of the sonata form implies the use of two themes in the exposition; then comes the development section which usually features an elaboration on said themes and/or new music; a close and a coda -if there are unresolved matters-. In this symphony, Schumann has all of the above, but the development section looks like this:

Development Section	Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 2	New Episode on Theme 2	Coda	Another Closing idea
Measure	87-100	101-120	121-146	147-174	175-248	249-296	297-336	337-end
Event	Transformation from 1st theme from exposition	Thematic transformation from principal motif	Becomes material for finale	Different music	Same music. Slightly reorchestrated, up a minor 3rd	New music instead of Recapitulation	Elements of Theme 4	Thematic transformation from principal motif
Beginning harmony	E-flat minor	E-flat minor	D-flat Major	C Major	F-sharp minor	A minor	A Major	D Major

Figure 3.15 Summary of Development section from 1st movement

This chart demonstrates how the sonata form ceases to be that in order to become something on its own. We can also see how Schumann also takes theme 2 and repeats it almost verbatim and then he creates a new episode based on it after that. Underneath all of this, there is the connecting thread of the main motif, even when there seems to be new music, as that also becomes part of something else that comes later in the piece, like theme 3.

The *Romanze* begins with a chord in D-minor after hearing D-Major, which was the last sound from the previous movement. This chord functions as a iv chord since the tonic of the *Romanze* is A-minor. Schumann begins with a beautiful, baroque melody given to a solo oboe and cello accompanied by pizzicato strings along with

clarinets and bassoons. Originally this accompaniment was to be done by a guitar. After hearing this melody Schumann reintroduces the same music from the first movement, transposed and re-orchestrated, which leads to the trio.

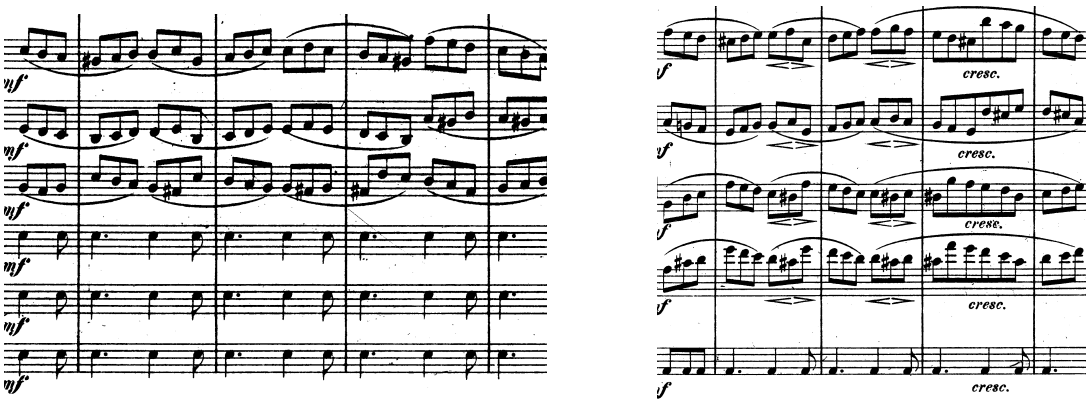


Figure 3.16 Strings. Left score from *Romanze*. Measures 370-374

Right score from 1st movement. Measures 10-14

The Scherzo provides a nice contrast to what has been presented so far. As mentioned before, the melody is an inversion of the main motif while the chords from the downbeats remind us of the third theme from the development of the first movement. Structurally, the form is as follows:

Scherzo	Trio	Scherzo 2	Trio 2
New transformation of the motif (inversion)	Music from the B section of the Romanze	Exact repetition from Scherzo 1, minus the repeats	Slightly varied repetition of Trio 1
D-minor	B-flat Major	D-minor	B-flat Major

Figure 3.17 Form of Scherzo Movement

At the end, this movement becomes weaker, and it dissolves into the fourth movement in a way that suggests that time has stopped. However the music does not stop and the transition becomes a “new-familiar” beginning.

The fourth movement is written in sonata form, and it starts in a similar way as the first movement: there is a slow introduction, then a *stringendo* that leads into the *Lebhaft,* where we get the first theme shown in Figure 3.14. Besides this, there are also two elements utilized again from the first movement: the I-IV-I harmonic progression and the principal theme from the exposition of the first movement in the lower strings.

As the music advances, Schumann recycles a passage from the first movement by inserting it as the close of the exposition, where we find once more the plagal progression at the double bar.

The development section includes a fugal episode not found anywhere else in the symphony. The recapitulation omits the principal theme and starts right away with the second theme. The coda starts with the music from the development, transposed, and from this moment on the music begins to avoid cadences and instead builds up momentum. The following tempo marking *Schneller* brings the harmony to D Major as it introduces a theme in the lower strings and bassoons that will be used later on in the *Presto*. The symphony ends fully charged of energy.

Schumann's fourth symphony was composed with the intention of being presented as a gift to Clara, his wife, for her birthday in 1841. It was a work that Schumann started almost immediately after finishing his first symphony, as he was very prolific and happy because he just had become Clara's husband.

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